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CONFIDENTIAL.

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196

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424

FURTHER CORRESPONDENCE

RESPECTING

ASIATIC TURKEY.

[In continuation of Confidential Paper No. 7063.]

196

April to June 1898.

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CONFIDENTIAL.

Further Correspondence respecting Asiatic Turkey.

[In continuation of Confidential Paper No. 7063.]

No. 1.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received April 4.)

(No. 183. Confidential.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, March* 25, 1898.

SOME days since Sir W. Whittall, President of the Armenian Relief Committee, wrote to me as follows:—

"I notice that, in reply to a question in Parliament in *re* Yussuf Yunan, it was stated that there was no proof of any complicity on the part of Turkish officials at Saïrt in the murder and plunder of the unfortunate man. How far the letter written by him two days before the murder, and in which he narrated the persecutions and the threats of the various officials because he refused to let them have any of our relief moneys, is a proof I cannot say, but we have the original letter. . . . ."

I have the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith a translation of the most important parts of the letter referred to, which were sent to me by Sir W. Whittall, and which he states is of undoubted authenticity.

I have, &c.

(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 1.

Extracts from Letter dictated to Selim Ohann, his Scribe, and dated Saïrt, February 25, 1897.

[P.S.—The letter is addressed to me and the Relief Committee.]

(Translation.)

"A DAY before the present date we received your letter by post, and before we could open and read the letter the Mutessarif and the Public Prosecutor sent after me and said: 'You have received by post 250*l.*; it is therefore necessary you should let us have 10,000 piastres of it as a loan until a period after the feast of Ramazan, when we will repay you.' Then I answered that of the money I loaned you four months ago there still remain with you about 3,700 piastres, then how shall I loan you a second time? Besides, I dun you every day, and cannot get a para from you, so I cannot give you a para.

"Then the Public Prosecutor and the Mutessarif began to address me with talk that was irrelevant, and said: 'We will take it from you by force. Go your way, therefore, to-day and think it over, and to-morrow we will take from you by force 10,000 piastres.' To-day, also, while writing this, and in the presence of the Distributing Committee, a zaptieh came and said to me: 'The Mutessarif calls you.'

Then I said to him, 'Wait a little until I finish writing the letter, and then I will come.' He then answered, 'No; but I will take you by force.' Then I went with him into the presence of the Mutessarif, who said to me, 'I have prepared a stick for you that I may beat you with sticks. Where are the 10,000 piastres about which we spoke to you yesterday?' I said to him that I could not give him a para of this money, because it is the money of the poor. Finally, after much talk, the Mutessarif sent me in charge of the zaptieh to the Public Prosecutor. When I came into his presence the Cadi was also sitting with him. 'The Public Prosecutor said to me, 'Have you brought the 10,000 piastres of which we spoke to you yesterday?' I replied that I could not give him a para of this money without the orders of its owner (i.e., Khowaja Andrus). Upon this he began to curse and revile me with words not proper to be repeated, so that he left no vile word unsaid to me. I then said, 'I can by no means let you have anything at all.' He then addressed the zaptieh, 'Take him to the Mutessarif that he may exile him and cast him out of the city.' I went back to the Pasha and began to complain to him, wishing to know by what right the Public Prosecutor reviles me so. He then began also to reproach me and say, 'Why do you not give? And if you do not give 10,000, then give 5,000.' I said again, I cannot give because the money is for the poor, and under the order of Mr. Andrus. Then they cast me out and I departed. . . . . .

"We do not know how the matter respecting the request of the Government to me to loan it money will end. So far as I shall be able I will not loan them a para."

Note.—I can testify that the handwriting of the letter is that of Selim Ibu Yussuf Ohann, whom I arranged with to be the scribe of Khowaja Yussuf Yunan, even as he was mine while I was in Sairt.

(Signed) A. N. ANDRUS.

Mardin, August 9, 1897.

No. 2.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(*Received April* 4.)

(No. 185.)

Constantinople, March 26, 1898.

My Lord,

I HAVE the honour to state that Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis recently reported the murder of the Chief of Police in that place.

The crime was committed in a house of ill-fame kept by Armenians, who have informed the Vali that it was the act of eight Armenian revolutionists.

About fifteen Armenians have now been arrested for supposed complicity in the murder, among them being a Commissary and a policeman; but, so far, the culprits have not been discovered.

Though the incident at first caused some disturbance, the town is now quiet, and Mr. Monahan sees no grounds for alarm.

I have, &c.

(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

No. 3.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(*Received May* 2.)

(No. 187.)

Constantinople. March 28, 1898.

My Lord,

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Adana containing a report on the industries established in the Hadjin district in connection with Armenian relief, together with samples of the fabrics produced.

I have, &c.

(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 3.

Major Massy to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 18.)

Adana, March 7, 1898.

Sir,

I HAVE the honour to give the following particulars of our relief industries in the Hadjin district, commenced ten months ago, in case your Excellency may desire to transmit them, together with the inclosed patterns, to his Grace the Duke of Westminster, with the hope that our efforts may prove an incentive to further charitable donations. We may thus be able to keep alive an interest in the needs of the Armenian Christians who are actually passing through one of the most trying phases since the outbreak nearly three years ago.

The whole population, both Moslem and Christian, of this vilayet is on the verge of starvation, commerce is at a standstill owing to the almost total failure of the crops these last three years, to political disturbances, and to the utterly corrupt officials who take what there is to be taken from everyone.

These circumstances render it all the more pleasant to be able to report to your Excellency the increasing success of our Hadjin industries, as well as the untiring and patient interest displayed therein by the Rev. J. C. Martin, for whose assistance I am particularly grateful.

This work was started ten months ago in consequence of my observing that the Christians were confined to the town, unable to circulate freely to obtain a livelihood.

Your Excellency will recall that I at first asked for 500 liras for this object, and a further sum of 200 liras later. From general relief funds I was able to devote 750 liras for this object, this sum being paid out to the needy in wages for work done in our service.

By this means we were able not only to feed the hungry but to increase our capital without further appeal to your Excellency.

Out of this 1,450 liras we invested 900 liras in land and buildings for our industries, which would bring in at least 1,000 liras if now sold; for cotton and wool yarn we have expended 344 liras, looms and fittings and weavers' wages 156 liras, and we have goods in hand value 50 liras, thus making our total of 1,450 liras.

In return for this we have:—

The land and buildings, 1,000 liras.

Woven cloth and yarn in hand, 350 liras.

Looms, machinery, stock in hand, 150 liras.

Value of stock, 1,500 liras.

We employ more than 160 persons daily, thus feeding, counting their families, some 900 to 1,000 people, who would otherwise starve or remain dependent on our daily relief.

Your Excellency can understand from this the economy effected by these works instead of the whole of our charitable funds being sunk to supply bread to the hungry.

Upon my return from leave I shall endeavour to start similar works in the Payas district.

It will be the better realized how this industry has progressed when I add that in the last ten months the Government had to be prevailed upon to sanction it, suitable buildings had to be erected after overcoming much opposition from the local authorities, looms had to be made and set up, yarns and dyes had to be brought from abroad, and workers in the several departments produced out of utterly raw and untrained natives, such industries being hitherto quite unknown in these parts. Nevertheless 40,000 yards of cotton stuffs have been woven, we are now making at the rate of 250 yards a day, and we have a very rising rug and chair-making industry, while a branch has been established in the Shahr district, north of Hadjin, where the Christians were on the verge of starvation when I last visited them.

The way is now clear for greatly extending these industries. Mr. Martin reports that a further grant of 500 liras would admit of our extending this work five-fold within the next twelve months.

In respectfully appealing for this further grant I would beg to dwell upon the great advantages of our work which is securing a measure of prosperity hitherto unknown to those remote parts. The importance of this may be grasped when I say that on my first visit to Hadjin, two years ago, I found the whole population starving, and it was with a heavy heart that I turned to return as I thought of the future of these poor people.

At the same time the Hadjinlis did not conceal their intention of following, in their

despair, the example set by Zeitoun: "Better die by the sword than a lingering death by starvation" they said to me on every side. I prevailed on them to have patience.

The situation is now a very different one. Through generous donations from England and America, and the constant and energetic support granted to me by your Excellency, we have now passed into more prosperous times. We have, moreover taught the people to work for their daily bread instead of sitting in idleness to brood over their unhappy lot while we feed them. Feeling the danger of encouraging this, I am curtailing the indiscrimate relief as much as possible so that the small sum asked for may suffice for this year.

On the other hand I would ask your Excellency to support my enterprise by recommending a further grant of 500 liras for Hadjin district, which will suffice to place it in independent circumstances in the future. This sum would be gratefully received by Mr. Martin to whom it could be remitted direct, spread over several months, if necessary.

I feel the greater pleasure in communicating these particulars to your Excellency, as in carrying out the work I have been able to overcome all difficulties and to settle every question with the Government locally, so far, without the necessity of troubling your Excellency.

I have, &c.
(Signed) P. H. H. MASSY.

No. 4.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received April 4.)

(No. 191.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, March 29, 1898.*

WITH reference to my despatch No. 804 of the 6th December last, I have the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch, which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul at Aleppo, reporting the departure from Mersina of Armenian political prisoners who are to undergo their trial at Adrianople.

Her Majesty's Consul at Angora informs me that these individuals have already passed through Konia.

I learn that this change of venue is the result of representations made by the Austrian Embassy. The Sublime Porte, though obliged to give reparation for the treatment of M. Brazzafolli, the Agent of the Austrian Lloyd at Mersina, insisted on trying him. Baron Calice on this demanded that his trial should be kept absolutely separate from that of the other prisoners. The Sublime Porte replied that this was impossible as the two cases were intimately connected, upon which the Embassy insisted that the proceedings should be conducted elsewhere than at Mersina in order to insure a fair trial, and suggested Smyrna as a suitable place. The Porte, however, preferred to transfer the case to Adrianople, to which Baron Calice offered no objection.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 4.

Consul Barnham to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 18.)
Sir, *Aleppo, March 14, 1898.*

I HAVE this day received a letter from Mr. Loïse, Dragoman to the Vice-Consulate of Mersina, requesting me to inform your Excellency that on the night of the 8th instant, shortly after Major Massy's departure on leave, the authorities sent the twenty-two Armenian prisoners, then in prison at Mersina, to Tarsus by special train, that Mr. Loïse called upon the Mutessarif to ascertain the reason, and was informed that orders had come from Constantinople that these persons should be taken overland to Konia, and thence to Adrianople where they would be put upon their trial. Mr. Loïse adds that they are to perform the eight days' journey to Konia in springless Circassian carts, that many of them are sick, and that their general condition of health is such that the journey must be attended by great suffering.

I telegraphed the substance of Mr. Loïse's letter to your Excellency this morning.

I have, &c.
(Signed) HENRY D. BARNHAM.

No. 5.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received April 4.)

(No. 193.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, March 31, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch, which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul at Erzeroum, reporting on the movement of troops from that town to the Russian frontier.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 5.

Consul Graves to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 6.)
Sir, *Erzeroum, March 19, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to report that the four battalions of the 25th Infantry Regiment have been ordered to leave Erzeroum for the Russian frontier.

Rumours are rife, as is usual at this season, of military preparations on the Russian side, and although I believe that they are not in any way confirmed by the reports received by the authorities here, the belief seems general in Turkish military circles that relations with Russia have become somewhat strained, and that it behoves them to be on their guard against a possible aggression from that quarter.

I have, &c.
(Signed) R. W. GRAVES.

No. 6.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received April 4.)

(No. 194.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, March 31, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch, which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Sivas, reporting on a visit which he recently made to Gurun and Darende.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 6.

Captain Maunsell to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 27.)
Sir, *Sivas, March 20, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to report that I have visited Gurun and Darende, travelling by the "chaussée" route from here to those places.

From the latter place I struck across country to join the Sivas-Malatia road near Hassan Chelebi, and returned here along that route through Kangal and Delikli Tash.

My object was primarily to visit the large Armenian centre of Gurun, which had not been visited for some sixteen years by Her Majesty's Consuls, and which suffered very severely in the massacres.

On the other routes, minor Armenian centres were visited, such as Darende, Vlash, Manjulik, Kangal, &c.

In passing from Darende to Hassan Chelebi I was obliged, owing to a severe snow-storm, to shelter, and pass along a route lying a few miles outside the Sivas Vilayet, and

I took occasion to visit the very interesting Kurd country of which Aivalu is the centre, and which belongs to the Caza of Arga, in the Vilayet of Mamuret-el-Aziz.

Gurun lies in a deep narrow valley, comprises a large number of scattered houses among rich orchards and gardens, extending some 3 miles on either side of a central market.

There is a large Protestant community, with Armenians and Catholics also, the latter of which did not suffer at all during the massacres.

The Gurun massacres were begun under peculiarly treacherous circumstances; the Kurds from the neighbouring hills were collected round the valley; the Government induced the Armenians to give up the few arms they possessed, promising protection, after which the Kurds were let loose to kill and pillage for altogether eight days.

Out of 1,500 houses existing before the massacres, 800 were burnt and destroyed; the largest houses being principally aimed at, and the greater part of those most skilled in the weaving industry were killed also.

In January 1897, a sum of 500*l.* of relief money was allotted to start the weaving industry again, the yarn being purchased in England for the purpose.

I am glad to be able to inform your Excellency that this outlay has been attended with the best results, and the important weaving industry is now firmly re-established and is growing, although it has not by any means attained to the same degree of prosperity as before the massacres.

However, such a very large proportion of men were killed that the widows and orphans are exceptionally numerous.

There is a branch of the Sivas orphanage at Gurun containing seventy boys and girls, while some others are boarded out.

There are sixty looms which employ widows and orphans, and as many as possible are engaged in weaving. But there are several more or less helpless ones who require assistance.

A number of girls who were carried off by the Kurds at the time of the massacres have been returned, with their children, to Gurun.

I may notice here how little, as a rule, the richer Armenians do to help their poorer compatriots in these troublous time.

This is one of their well-known characteristics, but even this winter, which has been the severest known in Sivas for many years, failed to move them to give more than a few piastres each to the poor.

Similarly, in Gurun, the richer Armenians do very little to help their neighbours, although I understand the Protestants have a regular small subscription per week to help the poor.

Another instance is the Headman of Manjulik, who had just completed for himself, what is, in those parts, a very fine house, while he complacently complained to me of the extreme poverty of some of his neighbours.

In Shoghl, an Armenian quarter at the upper end of the Gurun valley, the large Armenian church was burnt; the walls are still standing, but money is not forthcoming to rebuild it.

The Protestant church and school of Shoghl were in one building, which was also destroyed; the money is ready to commence rebuilding; timber, &c., has also been brought, but permission is still withheld by Government.

The Vali, however, states that he will endeavour to hurry things, and is now at work on the matter.

There are a few small Armenian or mixed villages in the neighbourhood of Gurun. Karahissar, forty houses; and Kavak, [illegible] houses, lie to the south; the former had its church and school both burnt, neither of which have been rebuilt.

Kara Euren, a mixed village of Turks and Armenians, to the north of the valley, was completely pillaged, but no one was killed.

Oxen were given from the relief fund last year to these villages, and a plentiful harvest last summer has helped them very much.

They require some assistance this spring, which is being given them in the form of seed for sowing.

The Kaimakam of Gurun, Hassan Tahsin Effendi, was at Niksar at the time of the massacres, after which he was transferred here. He is a man of no great attainments, but is not fanatical, and is generally liked.

He is assisted by an excellent Muavin, Paskal Effendi, who helps him in many ways when dealing with Christians, and who possesses great tact—a quality very often wanting in Armenians when placed in official positions.

At Darende, I regret to say that affairs are not so promising to the Armenians.

Darende contains 1,200 houses, extended for some 4 miles among orchards and gardens on either bank of the Tokhma Su, is divided into eighteen "mahalle," of which two are Armenian, numbering some 250 houses.

A short distance to the south is the mixed village of Ashudi, which contains 80 Christian houses out of a total of 300.

All these Christian houses were completely pillaged at the time of the massacres, but a comparatively small number (seventy-five) were killed in Darende.

There is no industry to revive like that of Gurun, although a certain amount of cotton-weaving and shoe-making is done.

The greater part of the Christians are extremely poor, and I am afraid there is no chance of improvement while the present Kaimakam, Mustafa Shukri Effendi, remains in office.

He is an extreme fanatic, and loses no opportunity of oppressing the Christians as much as possible.

He takes more than the ordinary amount of bribes, and uses every possible indirect means of accumulating money.

In this remote corner of the vilayet he seems to have been carrying on much as he liked, refusing to allow Petitions to be forwarded.

I find he has been causing the sale of oxen and donkeys, and in some cases even the land of Armenians to meet the taxes and his indirect demands.

I have drawn the Vali's attention to this, and he yesterday sent telegraphic instructions to the Kaimakam on this point.

From Darende I visited Aivalu and was most hospitably received by Muhammad Agha, a Kurdish Derebey who lives there.

This village is the centre of a carpet-weaving industry, the goods being sold to travelling merchants from Kaisarie. Some six years ago this country was examined by engineers with a view to making a railway from Kaisarie towards Malatia.

The route from Tunus past Manjulik down the valley of the Baliklu Su, passing Aivalu and reaching the Tokhma Su Valley at the junction of the two streams which takes place below Darende, is the most suitable.

The country is mostly open steppe, and this certainly seems the easiest line to cross the watershed between the Kizil Irmak and the Euphrates.

The Kurds here are a branch of others to the south-east known as the Akche Dagh Kurds. Their habits are chiefly pastoral, and they go into tents for the summer on the neighbouring mountains. They wear a certain distinctive dress.

It is curious to remark, as showing how far public opinion is moved in this matter, that one of the first questions of this Kurdish Chief to me was whether I thought war would commence with Russia this spring. A great number of questions about Egypt followed, and he was good enough to say that he thought the English Government there a very good one.

At Kangal, on the main Sivas–Malatia road, a mixed village of 250 houses, of which 70 are Armenian.

I was very glad to notice that since my representations to the Vali on the subject of illegal taxation in this village, as mentioned in my despatch No. 12 of the 1st January last, he had sent telegraphic instructions, and nothing has happened since that date, the Armenians being quite content.

The mixed villages of Moslems and Armenians are never quite as quiet as the separate villages of Armenians, as the former often still refer to the massacres in the form of threats, but not very serious ones.

As regards the other small Armenian villages I visited, their chief want seems to be seed for sowing, and I am arranging with Mr. Perry, American missionary here, to commence distributing shortly to twenty-four villages in the neighbourhood of Sivas, Manjulik, Kangal, and Gurun.

I may add that I was received most hospitably by the authorities in Gurun and Darende and elsewhere. The country generally is perfectly quiet.

I have, &c.

(Signed) F. R. MAUNSELL.

No. 7.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received April 4.)

(No. 195.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, March* 31, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Sivas, reporting on the military situation in that vilayet.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 7.

Captain Maunsell to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 28.)
Sir, *Sivas, March* 20, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to report that orders have been given for the formation of a new regiment of Hamidié cavalry in this vilayet, in the Caza of Kochkiri, among the Kizilbash Kurds of the tribe of Kochkiri, living in the mountains north-east of Zara, and under the leadership of Mustafa Bey, son of a former celebrated Kurdish Dereboy named Alishan Bey, who lived at Chit.

Mustafa Bey has been nominated Commander with the rank of Bimbashi, but I have not yet been able to determine what success he has had in enrolling the regiment (estimated strength, 500 men).

He paid a visit about a month ago to Zekki Pasha at Erzingian.

This last autumn he was imprisoned here for no specified cause, but bought himself free after a short time.

These Kurds are noted for giving a good deal of trouble to Government, but their Chief behaved well at the time of the Divrighi massacres in befriending and saving flying Armenians.

The only other regiment of Hamidie cavalry in this vilayet is that of the Karapapak tribe under the leadership of Mihr Ali, who lives at Mihr Ali Keui, about a day's journey to the south east of Sivas.

A portion of the regiment, numbering nominally 250 men, is raised from the villages near the Artova between Yenikhan and Tokat, the central village being Chiftlik.

The total strength of the regiment is given as 800 men, but I hear that only 500 could actually be put in the field.

I understand that Mihr Ali is shortly to be called into Sivas.

During the past winter several officers of this regiment have been attached to the regular cavalry here to learn their drills, &c.

Care has been taken to pay them regularly during this period.

The garrison of Sivas consists of:—

1. Two squadrons of the 20th Regiment of Regular Cavalry; the remaining two squadrons being at Tokat.

2. One battalion of the 30th Regiment Nizam Infantry, of which another battalion remains at Erzeroum, whither it was sent last autumn.

Half a battalion of Nizam Infantry from Mahatia is stationed at Gurun since the massacres, the other half being at Divrighi.

Sivas is the head-quarters of the 10th Division (Firka).

I have for some weeks now been receiving rumours that the Redifs are to be called out throughout the country directly the snow clears off and leaves the country practicable for military movement.

This is directed against Russia, and war is spoken of as being extremely probable this spring.

The Armenians fear greatly that it called out the Redifs will commit great excesses on the Christian population before leaving their homes.

I have, &c.
(Signed) F. R. MAUNSELL.

No. 8.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received April 4.)

(No. 197.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, March* 31, 1898.

WITH reference to my despatch No. 135 of the 9th instant, I have the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul-General at Beyrout respecting the election of the Greek Catholic Patriarch, Butros Jirijiry.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 8.

Consul-General Drummond-Hay to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 15.)
Sir, *Beirout, March* 22, 1898.

WITH reference to my despatch No. 14 of the 15th instant reporting on the election of the Greek Catholic Patriarch, I have the honour to inform your Excellency that the Sublime Porte appears disinclined to confirm the appointment of Butros Jirijiry.

Reshid Bey and Naoum Pasha met yesterday at the Serai of Beirout, and after a long conference summoned several Notables of the Greek Catholic community, and advised them to persuade the Patriarch to resign, hinting that they would not promote their interests with the Government by insisting on the confirmation of Jirijiry.

The Notables in their reply begged the Governors to reconsider the matter, assuring them of Jirijiry's loyalty, and that he could not be expected to resign, as the elections had been fairly conducted.

The Governors thereupon summoned Bishop Jeha of Aleppo, and directed him to remain in Beirout, he being still regarded by the Sublime Porte as Acting Greek Catholic Patriarch.

Jirijiry has been at Sarba since the election waiting his Firman, and this incident will undoubtedly increase his popularity amongst the Greek Catholics, who are in great dismay over the opposition of the Sublime Porte.

I have, &c.
(Signed) R. DRUMMOND-HAY.

No. 9.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received April 4.)

(No. 198.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, March* 31, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul at Jeddah respecting the arrival of troops at that town and the attitude of the Bedouins of the Hedjaz.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 9.

Consul Dewey to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 25.)
Sir, *Jeddah, March* 9, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to report that the Turkish steam-ship "Hodeidah" arrived at this port with 2,153 infantry soldiers, mostly Anatolians, on the 5th instant.

This steamer, after leaving Constantinople, had called at Smyrna, Mersina, and Selefke, I believe.

It is rumoured that more troops are expected here shortly.

The newly-arrived men are largely in excess of any number needed to relieve those whose period of service in Hedjaz has expired.

And since August 1897 there have been vague rumours of an intention on the part of the Government to chastise the Bedouin tribes if they persist in their turbulent courses, such as holding pilgrim caravans to ransom (as last year they did at Raboc) and recently in blocking the Yembo–Medina way, and even in assembling in considerable numbers with arms in this neighbourhood.

Still, it is more likely that the Government are merely following this course so as to let the Bedouins clearly understand that the means are at hand for their utter destruction, if the authorities should be driven to adopt coercive measures by their repeated acts of turbulence and insolence.

It may also be noted that the arrival of the troops was immediately followed by an act of clemency in the release of some thirty-five or thirty-seven Harb prisoners from prison in Jeddah.

On the other hand, some palliation must be allowed to the Bedouins for their excesses on account of their extreme poverty, and though writing on the 4th January (*vide* No. 1), I mentioned that rain was falling abundantly, especially at Medina, it has proved generally insufficient except at Medina and to the south of Hedjaz, and thus their main resources derived from milk, butter, cheese, and a little grain will be far from plentiful, and they may still be inclined to resort to robbery now and again.

Three small cannons were lately removed to a position just outside the town commanding the Mecca road.

I have, &c.
(Signed) G. P. DEVEY.

No. 10.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received April 4.)

(No. 194.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, March 31, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul at Jeddah, respecting the migration of Bedouins southward from the Hedjaz.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 10.

Consul Devey to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 28.)
Sir, *Jeddah, March 14, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to inform your Excellency that a rumour, of no foundation, has been heard here, that the new Emir of Nejd had been lately assassinated; according to an equally silly story, an Englishman in Arab guise, had penetrated into Nejd, where he had been murdered, and his notes and papers had been brought to the authorities at Mecca.

What is more worthy of attention, is a movement of Bedouins southwards from the Hedjaz. Only a few days ago some 2,000 or more passed close to this town towards Assir; this migration has been caused by want; the scarcity of rain in the greater part of the Hedjaz will have rendered the Bedouins rather more resourceless than usual, and as this year's sea pilgrimage will be unusually small (probably only about 30,000 in all) there will be less earned from camel hire and other services. These migrating Bedouins are of the Harb tribe and its families, and it is to be hoped that they will not come into serious collision with the tribes and inhabitants in the regions they are now about to occupy.

I have, &c.
(Signed) G. P. DEVEY.

No. 11.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received April 4.)

(No. 200.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, March 31, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Van, respecting the murder of three Armenian revolutionists, and the case of the girl Zarooin.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 11.

Captain Elliot to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 12.)
Sir, *Van, March 12, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to return herewith the marginally-noted correspondence inclosed in your Excellency's despatch of the 18th February.

Lest the Grand Vizer's letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, confidentially obtained by Mr. Block, should produce the impression that I have been bringing grave charges against officials without sufficient evidence to justify me, I now beg permission to enter into details which before appeared superfluous.

The statement that the girl Zarooin is a prostitute is false. Her mother lives a few hundred yards from the Consulate, and the neighbours assure me that such is not the case.

As regards her violation in prison, I was told this by an official who is employed in the building where the girl was confined. He saw and heard quite enough to justify his assertion. He is not alone in what he states. The case was a matter of notoriety.

That the girl is not a virgin after being twice in a Turkish prison is not to be wondered at.

I have no faith in the protection afforded by the Armenian police, or the presence of an Armenian woman. I believe no one else here has.

As regards her revolutionary behaviour, there is no doubt that she was at one time actively engaged with her brother and his companions, but neither her position or abilities justify the importance attached to her acts.

Last year, before the events of August, she asked to be allowed to see me, and made a statement which led me to suspect that the late Murakhas of Van, availing himself of the disfavour with which her family was regarded by the authorities, was trying to get her into his power. She was also much annoyed by soldiers, who thought that no complaint from a girl in her position would be attended to. She promised to keep clear of revolutionary practices, and I secured her protection. I have no reason to believe that she broke her promise. Later, when the revolutionists, prominent among whom was her brother, Dikran Diroyan, were in the town, and the Acting Vali, Shemshi Pasha, asked me to treat with them, she proved very useful. I remarked nothing immodest in her behaviour.

As regards the shooting of Dikran Diroyan and his two companions at Korubash, after they had surrendered, I had the following grounds for the statements I made:—

The event took place on the Sultan's birthday. That morning Sheikh Mooss, the officer who commanded the detachment of troops employed, and who was a neighbour of mine, was in the Consulate talking to my Dragoman. He was dressed ready for the official reception. This was about 10 o'clock. About mid-day I heard several distant discharges of fire-arms. They lasted about a minute or two.

In the afternoon I made an official call on the Vali, and he told my colleagues and myself that three men had been killed that morning at Korubash, and that probably Diroyan was one of them. This was about 2 o'clock.

On my way home I talked with a zaptieh who had just come in with a report to the Vali from the scene of the occurrence. He gave me an account of a desperate battle lasting an hour or two, in which hundreds of rounds were expended on both sides.

I went a little out of my way to see the bodies which were being brought in on a cart, as I suspected the police had been shooting villagers. On the road I met another zaptieh, who had just returned from Korubash.

In reply to my questions he said, "There were three men; the Alai Bey told us to shoot them and we shot them." This man had travelled with me and I knew he was not particularly intelligent. When I remembered the firing I had heard in the morning, which had lasted but a few minutes at most, I concluded he had not learnt the story properly and that he had spoken the truth.

The bodies in the cart were covered, but the troops had the men's rifles and cartridge belts, so there was no doubt as to their being armed.

The officer who had called at the Consulate was riding with the troops. This was about 4 o'clock.

I could not understand how three desperate men, well armed, should not have sold their lives better. Had they remained in the village it would have been very nasty work turning them out of the labyrinth of dark rooms and stables of which the houses consist. Had they taken to the hill the deep snow would have made it difficult for their assailants to leave the beaten tracks, which are just wide enough for one to advance at a time. Moreover, most objects show up well against snow and make excellent marks for a rifle.

I decided to visit Korubash.

At the village, I heard that the police went there, beat the villagers with the butts of their rifles and accused them of harbouring revolutionists. One or two men showed me large bruises on their bodies.

On the approach of the police and troops the three men had left the village. They were seen some little distance off by the villagers with the troops and police following just before they disappeared from sight round a bend of the valley. A quarter-of-an-hour or so afterwards the villagers were ordered to get a cart and "fetch the carcases of those dogs." They denied that the three Armenians had resisted.

About half-a-mile from the village I was shown the spot. In a slight hollow the snow for a space of a few square yards in extent was trampled down and drenched with blood. The footsteps all came from one direction. Close at hand were two good positions for making a stand, one of which a small bit of terraced cultivation commanding the approach up a small valley the men had passed, the scene of their death being about 50 yards beyond. All indications agreed with my suspicions, the villagers' statements and the stories that were current in the town a few days later.

Several officials, Mahommedan and Armenian, came to the Consulate to tell me of the affair. They had heard what had happened from eye-witnesses, and though the stories varied in details, such as the amount of money the Alai Bey took from the dead men's pockets, &c., they were in main points the same.

My informants agreed in reprobating the conduct of those responsible for the crime.

It is possible a shot or two was fired before the men held up their rifles and called out that they surrendered. They stood up a few yards apart and were shot down at the Alai Bey's orders. When they were wounded and disarmed, possibly one or two were dead, the Alai Bey Izzat and the Second Commissary of Police Husni going up to them fired repeated shots into their faces and bodies making the remark that appears usual on such occasions: "I offer a sacrifice to Sultan Abdul Hamid."

The Alai Bey was in command of the whole party, the officer referred to above acting under his orders in command of the troops.

How far Shemshi Pasha was responsible for what happened I cannot say. I did not go near him after the occurrence, but I was told he had a wonderful tale of battle to tell.

He telegraphed for rewards and decorations for those concerned and remarked that if he did not get something himself by the forthcoming Bairam he would resign.

The following are the points on which my assertion is based:—

1. The question of time. The scene of the murder is about 2 miles distant across the plain. To get there at that time it was necessary to march round by road between 3 and 4 miles owing to the deep snow that lay on the plain.

I estimate the time that elapsed between my Dragoman's coming up-stairs to say that Sheikh Mooss was in his room, and the time I heard the firing as about two hours.

Allowing that Sheikh Mooss got his orders immediately on leaving the Consulate he had to assemble and get his men under arms. They are quartered in a house about five minutes from here. This would take him fifteen or twenty minutes. To Korubash is a good hour's march in the condition the roads then were and to where the men were killed another ten minutes. Say an hour and a-half altogether, if no delays occurred. This leaves little more than half-an-hour, hardly sufficient for the battle described by the Vali. Still it might have been managed in the time. The villagers' statements as to the interval that elapsed after they lost sight of the troops and police to the return of the men to the village for the cart agrees better with my calculations.

2. The firing I heard only lasted a minute or two.

3. The bandoliers taken from the bodies were full or nearly so of undischarged cartridges. My Dragoman saw them and the rifles. This statement has been confirmed independently. Sheikh Mooss was about to bring them to show me when he was ordered to take them to the barracks in the city.
4. Practical absence of casualties amongst troops and zaptiehs.
5. Statements to me of two zaptiehs, more particularly that of the second.
6. Marks on the snow and nature of the locality where the men were killed.
7. Statements of Korubash villagers to me.
8. Statements of officials to me.

I beg to submit that my own observations, and the various statements made to me taken together, furnish, not a very strong supposition that the men were shot down after having surrendered as I stated, but that they admit of no other reasonable conclusion whatever.

I have, &c.
(Signed) G. S. ELLIOT.

No. 12.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received April 11.)

(No. 215.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April 6, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Kharput, respecting the agitation among the Turks at that town, in connection with its proposed conversion into a Kaimakamlik.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 12.

Vice-Consul Fontana to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 13.)
Sir, *Kharput, March 22, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to report to your Excellency that considerable agitation has arisen among the Moslems of the town of Kharput, fostered by the Notables there, with a view to its detachment from the direct control of the Vali and other authorities at Mezreh, and conversion into a separate caza, under the jurisdiction of a Kaimakam. Musulman shopkeepers recently closed their shops, and threatened to pay no taxes unless the Kaimakamlik were granted; and a deputation composed of the most influential Turks there has now waited upon the Vali urging him to strongly represent the necessity for the innovation (proposed in the first instance by Marshal Shakir Pasha) to the Sublime Porte.

Kharput is situated upon the crest of steep hills at about an hour's distance from Mezreh, and communication between the two places becomes difficult in time of snow and frost.

The real source of the agitation appears, however, to lie in the fact of many Christian and even Turkish families having moved from Kharput, since the troubles there, to Mezreh, where no disturbance took place, and where the Government House, Barracks, Law Courts, and other Public Offices are located; and that the value of house property, belonging for the most part to Turks, at Kharput, has consequently much declined; and the general impression seems to be that, had the town a Local Government and Law Courts, the tendency to migrate to Mezreh would disappear.

In my humble opinion the town of Kharput, ancient though it be, is destined to dwindle within a few years into a half-deserted borough, even more miserable and, if possible, more neglected than it now is. Its conversion into a Kaimakamlik may retard, but cannot, I think, arrest its inevitable decay.

The water supply there is insufficient, the town lies huddled between an ancient wall and the steep slopes and cliffs leading to Mezreh and the plain, it is difficult of access, and is backed by only a few Turkish villages lying at long distances one from the other.

Mezreh, on the other hand, is of quite recent growth, unwalled, and extending

more and more every year; and situated as it is in a vast fertile and plentifully watered plain, dotted with some sixty villages, mostly Christian, and of comparatively facile access from all sides, Mezreh is in all probability destined to develop, sooner or later, into one of the most prosperous towns of Asia Minor.

I have, &c.
(Signed) RAPHAEL A. FONTANA.

No. 13.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received April 11.)

(No. 216.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April 6, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Kharput, respecting the reconstruction of the military hospital at that town.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 13.

Vice-Consul Fontana to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 12.)
Sir, *Kharput, March 21, 1898.*

IN continuation of my despatch to your Excellency No. 2 of the 18th January last, reporting the destruction of the building comprising the Commandant's quarters and the military hospital, I now have the honour to report that a Commission has been formed here under the presidency of the Defter-Dar, with the purpose of raising subscriptions throughout the vilayet for the reconstruction of the building in question. The sum already collected amounts, I am told, to above £ T. 500, and the local well-to-do Armenians complain that they are forced to subscribe, and that their subscriptions are far more liberal than those of the Turks. I am inclined, however, to believe that, unless certain pressure were brought to bear upon them, they would decline to contribute liberally to any fund whatever—even were the end in view a purely charitable one and the proceeds destined for the relief of their own poor.

I have, &c.
(Signed) RAPHAEL A. FONTANA.

No. 14.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received April 11.)

(No. 217.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April 6, 1898.*

WITH reference to my despatch No. 197 of the 31st ultimo, I have the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch, which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul at Damascus, respecting the election of the Greek Catholic Patriarch.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 14.

Consul Richards to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 9.)
Sir, *Damascus, March 24, 1898.*

WITH reference to my despatch No. 7 of the 3rd instant reporting the election, pending the receipt of an Imperial Irade approving thereof of Mgr. Geragiri, Bishop of Banias, to the vacant throne of the Greek Catholic Patriarchate, I have the

honour to inform your Excellency that a telegram has been received by the Vali informing him that the Ottoman Council of Ministers has refused to ratify this election. This decision, it would appear, now, was not altogether unexpected by those persons who were thoroughly acquainted with all the incidents in the past career of Mgr. Geragiri. By such it is alleged, though I cannot say how far the statement is well founded, that that Prelate, as quite a young man—before he entered the priesthood in fact—made the pilgrimage to Mecca, having previously taken the precaution to submit to such rites as are prescribed by the Mohammedan religious law in order the better to escape detection. It is even reported that he made the journey in company with the late Mr. William Gifford Palgrave, at one time our Minister to the Republic of Paraguay, though it does not appear by any means probable that Mr. Palgrave ever went to Mecca, though he travelled, it is true, all over Northern and Eastern Arabia. If the statement about Geragiri be true, the action of the Porte in refusing to ratify his election is perfectly intelligible.

Moreover, it is very doubtful whether, in view of the rejected candidate's notoriously impulsive and unreflecting character, and the undeniable fact that he is far from popular in the greater part of the province, it would have been a politic act, in any case, on the part of the Porte to confirm his election. It is an open secret that even in the Vatican, had it not been for other considerations to which perhaps undue importance was at the time attached, not Mgr. Geragiri, but Mgr. Nicolaos Cadi, Bishop of the Hauran, would have been the favoured candidate for the Patriarchate. I am assured that the Pope, were it not for the fact that he cannot go back on his own decision, would be by no means displeased, even now, if a way of escape out of the difficulty could be discovered, and it will be interesting to note and watch further developments of the incident.

It would appear that Mgr. Yeha, Bishop of Aleppo, who obtained the next greatest number of votes after Mgr. Geragiri, is much more popular than the latter, and is likely now to be elected.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. S. RICHARDS.

No. 15.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received April 11.)

(No. 221.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April 7, 1898.*

WITH reference to my despatch No. 200 of the 31st ultimo, and previous correspondence, respecting the Armenian woman Zaroubi Deroyan, I have the honour to report that, in consequence of the representations made on her behalf, the sentence of exile to Tripoli in Barbary passed on her for complicity with revolutionists has been annulled, and she has been handed over to the Ecclesiastical authorities of her community, who will place her in a convent at Damascus.

In view of the fact that the evidence against her was very strong, and was, moreover, admitted by her own compatriots, this latter sentence can hardly be regarded as unduly severe.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

No. 16

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received April 12.)

(No. 115.)
My Lord, *St. Petersburgh, April 7, 1898.*

WITH reference to the despatch No. 1 of the 21st June, 1897, to your Lordship from Her Majesty's Consul-General at Tabreez, and Sir P. Currie's No. 401 of the 26th July, 1897, inclosing a report by Mr. Elliot, Vice-Consul at Van, I have the honour to transmit herewith a translation by Mr. Carnegie of an article in the "Novoe Vremya," giving an account of the reception into the Orthodox Church of Mar Yunan Nestorian Bishop of Urmi, and his flock.

The formal ceremony took place yesterday in the Church of St. Alexander, Nevesky.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 16.

Substance of Article in the "Novoe Vremya" of March 25 (April 6), 1898.

THE "Novoe Vremya" gives an account of the ceremony of the admission of the Nestorian Bishop, Mar Yunan, into the Orthodox Church, which took place in the presence of the Holy Synod. The Bishop and his priests having first expressed their desire of being received into the Orthodox Church, together with their flock, they were conducted into the presence of the Holy Synod, which was represented by the Metropolitans of St. Petersburgh, Kieff, Moscow, &c., several Bishops, and the Procurator-General. After the customary question as to what he desired, the Bishop expressed his wish to become a member of the Orthodox Church, together with his flock, and then signed the necessary document on his own and their behalf.

The formal ceremony of admission was to take place the following day, being that of the Feast of the Annunciation, in the Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul, when the Bishop will be given a costly panagia, and the Archimandrites and priests crosses. They will also adopt the dress of the Orthodox clergy; at present they wear Tartar burnouses and high sheep's-wool caps with red tops.

No. 17.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(*Received April 16.*)

(No. 225.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April 9, 1898.*

WITH reference to my despatch No. 183, Confidential, of the 25th ultimo, I have the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith copy of a *pro-memorid* which I have caused to be presented to the Grand Vizier, calling his Highness' attention to the letter written by Yussuf Yunan before his death, and demanding payment by the Turkish Government of the money stolen from him and not yet recovered.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 17.

Pro-memorid.

IN their *note verbale* No. 69 of the 19th May last, and in other communications, Her Majesty's Embassy had the honour to draw the attention of the Sublime Porte to the murder at Sairt in March last year of Yussuf Yunan, Agent of the British Armenian Relief Committee.

The persons accused of the murder have since been condemned, but the sentence has been referred to the Court of Cassation for examination.

Her Majesty's Embassy have, however, received no reply from the Sublime Porte respecting the recovery and the restitution of the money. The robbery of this charitable fund has excited much indignation in England, and questions have been asked in the House of Commons, with the result that the Relief Committee have communicated to Her Majesty's Embassy the inclosed document. It is an Arabic letter, addressed to Mr. Andrus, President of the Mardin Relief Committee by Yussuf Yunan a few days before his death. It appears to be of undoubted authenticity, as will be seen from the certificate accompanying it, and relates how the Mutessarif and Public Prosecutor of Sairt called Yussuf Yunan before them, asked him to give them money, and threatened him when he refused.

Comment on this letter seems superfluous, and the Sublime Porte will doubtless relieve Her Majesty's Embassy from the painful necessity of formulating the accusations which it naturally suggests, by restoring the money stolen from Yussuf Yunan.

It can be proved that he had in his possession at least £ T. 370, of which only £ T. 30 have been recovered, leaving a balance of £ T. 340.

Constantinople, April 14, 1898.

No. 18.

Mr. C. Hardinge to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(*Received April 18.*)

(No. 46.)
My Lord, *Tehran, March 18, 1898.*

IN my despatch No. 18 of the 1st February, I had the honour to report the flight of some Armenian revolutionaries from Tabreez, of whose presence I had given warning to the Persian Government, and the measures taken by the Government to effect their arrest.

The Persian Government have since shown considerable activity, and numerous arrests have been made in Tabreez, amongst them being ten Armenian revolutionaries, of whom three were Russian subjects with Russian passports, and the remainder Turkish subjects.

The Local Government of the Province of Azerbaijan which extends to the Turkish frontier are showing energy in dispersing any gatherings of Armenians in the district of Khoi and Salmas where the raid of last year into Turkish territory was organized, and in confiscating all arms belonging to them.

I have, &c.
(Signed) CHARLES HARDINGE.

No. 19.

Consul Devey to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(*Received April 18.*)

(No. 2.)
My Lord, *Jeddah, March 31, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward copy of a despatch I am addressing to Constantinople.

The uneasiness referred to therein seems more pronounced than it was in the month of April last, when war broke out between Greece and Turkey.

I have, &c.
(Signed) G. P. DEVEY.

Inclosure in No. 19.

Consul Devey to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 33.)
Sir, *Jeddah, March 31, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to report upon the state of apprehension which has been observable among the Europeans during the last few days, its direct cause and contributory circumstances.

The suspicion of plague followed by the isolation of the town at once aroused great animosity against doctors and the Health Office and resident foreigners, which has been expressed in all sorts of wild rumours and reports varying from hour to hour, and in the muttering of some unpleasant threats.

It is only natural that this calamity falling just five weeks before the Haj, and depriving nine-tenths of the inhabitants of Jeddah of their chief means of livelihood for the whole year, should be most keenly resented.

It is most irritating for those accustomed and pleased to serve the arriving pilgrims in a hundred different ways to see ships bringing them here turn back to Yembo, or land them at a distance south of the town without communicating.

The Dutch Consul and myself particularly feel this, as so many Moslems from our respective dominions annually come on the pilgrimage.

Causes contributory are that very wild rumours have reached Jeddah from Tayif and Mecca, of which the truth may be sifted out perhaps, that some time-expired

soldiers at the former place fearing their quick return home might be prevented by the plague, behaved themselves in a disorderly manner and plundered some shops; a *mêlée* with Arabs ensued, and there were five killed, besides numerous casualties.

I have little accurate news from Mecca, except that merchants there banded together to protest to the Vali, that they would not tolerate isolation of Jeddah, as supplies would not be forthcoming, and it were better to risk dying of plague than to starve and have to starve others.

Mecca has sufficient supplies of grain for two or three weeks perhaps, but the price of sugar and other articles has already risen.

The Vali pacified the objectors, and promised that supplies should arrive safely and regularly.

The great caravan for Medina passed from Mecca at a couple of miles distance north of the town on the night of the 28th instant, and I regret to say a band of some eighty Harb tribesmen were pursuing and harassing them so, that on the outskirts of this town even three Turks were killed in the design of robbery, which has produced a further bad impression. The caravan was left to pursue its way without interference from here.

A bad report that a number of Bedouins attacked our Indian caravan somewhere about half-way between Hadda and Jeddah on the main route has just been spread this evening, but an hour later proves absolutely false on the best authority.

I have, &c.
(Signed) G. P. DEVEY.

No. 20.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(*Received April* 18.)

(No. 226.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April* 13, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul at Aleppo, giving details of the military forces stationed in that vilayet.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure 1 in No. 20.

Consul Barnham to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 20.)
Sir, *Aleppo, March* 31, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to forward for the information of the Military Attaché, a Return showing the names and strength of the different corps stationed in the Aleppo Vilayet.

I have, &c.
(Signed) H. D. BARNHAM.

Inclosure 2 in No. 20.

Return showing the Number and Stations of all Troops quartered in the Vilayet of Aleppo.

ALEPPO.—1. 1st battalion, 37th Regiment (Nizamié), strength, 1,000 men.
2. 4th battalion, 38th Regiment (Nizamié), strength, 1,000 men.
This battalion is employed collecting taxes from the Bedouins.
3. 1st battalion, 71st Regiment of Reserves (Khalil Rahman).
4. One regiment of cavalry (350 men).
5. One regiment of artillery (300 men).

N.B.—The Regular battalions are over their establishment. Deserters from other corps have been brought in and drafted into these battalions.

Marash. The 2nd and 3rd battalions of the 37th Regiment (Regulars) are divided between Zeitoun and Albistan.

Those at Zeitoun have been attacked with typhus and more than 200 died.

The strength of each battalion before the outbreak was about 700 men.

The 4th battalion is stationed at Marash.

The 3rd battalion of the 67th Safetia Reserves is divided between Aintab, Geoksun, and Albistan, and the Birah battalion at Andrin and Marash.

Ourfa.—1. One company of the 1st battalion of the 37th Regiment; strength, 100 men.

2. One company of the 1st battalion of the 38th Regiment; strength, 100 men.

3. No. 5 battalion of the 65th Regiment of Reserves is divided between Ourfa, Surondy, and Biredjik.

Antioch and Suedia.—1st battalion, 72nd Regiment of Reserves (from Jaffa), of which one buluk is stationed at Loshiya and Suedia, one at the port of Suedia, one at Ressab, and one at Antioch.

Alexandretta.—3rd battalion 72nd Regiment of Reserves from Medjdet, northern Palestine, is divided between Alexandretta, Beilan, and Arsons.

N.B.—It is under contemplation to keep a large garrison at Alexandretta, and the Vali of Aleppo is now at that place superintending the construction of barracks. This will form the subject of a later report.

(Signed) H. D. BARNHAM.

Aleppo, March 31, 1898.

No. 21.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(*Received April* 18.)

(No. 228.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April* 14, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Kharput, reporting the appointment of a Muavin to the Kaïmakam of Charsandjak.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 21.

Vice-Consul Fontana to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 15.)
Sir, *Kharput, March* 26, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to report to your Excellency that Minas Effendi Chukasian, a native of Sivas, has been appointed to succeed the late Bozos Effendi Tutvoyan as Mouavin to the Kaïmakam of the Charsandjak Caza, and has already proceeded to his post. He was recommended, I am told, before leaving Kharput, to avoid any action or attitude likely to touch the susceptibilities of the authorities and Agas at Peri.

Such recommendation can only mean, in plain paraphrase, that he should endeavour to merit the sobriquet of "Evet Effendim"—"Yes, Sir,"—bestowed by the local Turks, not unreasonably, upon Armenian Mouavins and other leading Armenian officials who, as a general rule, will scarcely venture to say "No" to, or disagree with a Turkish superior or colleague.

I have, &c.
(Signed) RAPHAEL A. FONTANA.

No. 22.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(*Received April* 18.)

(No. 229.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April* 14, 1898.

WITH reference to my despatch No. 217 of the 6th instant, I have the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul at Damascus, stating that the election of the Greek Catholic Patriarch of Antioch will be confirmed.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 22.

Consul Richards to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 12.)
Sir, *Damascus, March* 31, 1898.

WITH reference to my despatch No. 9 of the 24th instant reporting the refusal of the Ottoman Cabinet to ratify the election of Mgr. Gerngiri to the Greek Catholic Patriarchate, I have now the honour to inform your Excellency that this refusal has not been persisted in; on the contrary, it would appear now that the election, if it has not been confirmed already, as many assert, will shortly receive the necessary confirmation both from the Porte and finally, of course, from the Sultan himself.

I must regret that, in the despatch above referred to, I should have given your Excellency to understand that this would not be the case; and yet there can be no doubt, whatever, that the Ministers did refuse to confirm the election, and telegraphed in this sense to the Vali. I am informed that in the highest official quarters in Constantinople, certain foreign influence was brought to bear in favour of the elected candidate which ultimately proved irresistible, and so what was very strongly disapproved of early in the week, it was decided to regard with approval towards its end.

Mgr. Gerngiri, who is now in Beyrout, is expected to arrive here shortly.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. S. RICHARDS.

No. 23.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received April 18.)

(No. 231.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April* 14, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Sivas, reporting the arrival there of Mihr Ali Bey, Chief of the Karapapak tribe, and the steps taken with a view to the calling out of the Reserves should such a course be necessary.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 23.

Captain Maunsell to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 31.)
Sir, *Sivas, April* 3, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to report that Mihr Ali Bey, the Chief of the Karapapak tribe, arrived here yesterday, having been summoned here by an order from Constantinople. He is Colonel of the Hamidié Cavalry Regiment formed from his tribe, and his business here relates to that regiment. He is staying in the house of Bedri Bey, an officer of Regular Cavalry, having the rank of Colonel, and wearing the Hamidié uniform.

The latter has been here all the winter, is a great friend of Zekki Pasha, and practically acts here as his staff officer for Hamidié Cavalry. He is a very energetic and capable man.

I also beg to report that zaptiehs have been sent out to the various villages round to bring in the Headmen, in order to make a thorough examination of the numbers available, should orders be issued to call out the Redifs and Mustafiz in this neighbourhood. This has also been done under telegraphic orders from Constantinople.

I have, &c.
(Signed) F. B. MAUNSELL.

No. 24.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received April 18.)

(No. 232.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April* 14, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Van, containing a report of the present state of affairs in that vilayet.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 24.

Captain Elliot to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 11.)
Sir, *Van, March* 26, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to submit the following report on the state of affairs here:—

The trial of the political prisoners is still suspended. The reason of this is not, as the Vali alleged, that there is danger of a fanatical outbreak. Whatever the people may feel, I am convinced that such only occur to order. Most Turks feel humiliated by what has happened here recently, and would be glad to have the matter settled and forgotten.

They admit that, with the exception of the prisoners who confessed and gloried in their folly, the accused are the victims of the police.

The officials, now that they see that Shemshi Pasha has got into trouble, are, one and all, most anxious to set themselves right in the eyes of the Consuls; a chastened frame of mind that will have a good effect as long as it lasts.

The greatest scoundrels are most anxious to have "a long talk," in which they will "explain everything."

All are ready to give the departing Vali a parting kick, but he still holds them in terror.

I regret to report that Shemshi Pasha, although friendly relations have been resumed, still persists in his obstinate folly. He has nearly brought the village relief to a standstill. The men sent to Garidregan and Garvar, after spending six weeks there, have had to be recalled, and it has appeared better to give the money elsewhere. I telegraphed to your Excellency on this subject on the 5th March.

I am unable to say what happened there, but I hear that an Armenian, annoyed because he found that he was to have no share in the proposed distribution, went to the authorities and complained that the two men were going round the villages stirring up people to mischief.

The Kaimakam telegraphed direct to Constantinople, and probably Shemshi Pasha thought himself compromised. There is no doubt that he has to be careful now, as all his enemies, and he has many, are on the look out to do him a bad turn.

The delays in the trial of the prisoners mentioned above are to be deplored. I think now, however, that all but a few will be acquitted, and those condemned recommended to the clemency of the Sultan. This last measure is most advisable. Some weeks ago it was urged on Shemshi Pasha by the Defterdar Makbul Bey, as the best means of saving an awkward situation. Unfortunately, at this moment, the Cadi, a most respectable looking old gentleman, thinking there was money in the business, insinuated to the Vali that the Defterdar and others were intriguing against him. The Cadi eventually got into disgrace, but the distrust aroused by his words has not yet been lulled, and the present deadlock is due to the mutual suspicions of the various officials, and their anxiety that, whoever else comes to grief, they themselves shall escape.

The President of the Tribunal is an honest man who wishes to do his duty, but he is, at present, in a most awkward position, as he appears to be the most convenient person, for all the rascals to charge with accepting bribes. He lost his appointment at Mosul, because he acquitted a number of Armenians whom he considered innocent.

I propose to start very shortly for Persia, as it appears advisable to get there before the cross country tracks are open. It is reported that numbers of Armenians have been

arrested by the Persian authorities on the border. It is most desirable to prevent the tactics of last year being again resorted to, and innocent men who are unable to pay up, being imprisoned, while those who really mean mischief are left alone.

As Shemshi Pasha will soon leave, I take this opportunity of recording that, as far as taking bribes are concerned, his hands are clean. He is loyal and patriotic according to his lights. It is to be regretted that these good qualities are not combined with a little common sense and self-restraint.

I have, &c.
(Signed) G. S. ELLIOT.

No. 25.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(*Received April* 25.)

(No. 239.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April* 15, 1898.

WITH reference to my despatch No. 185 of the 26th ultimo, respecting the murder of the Chief of Police at Bitlis, I have the honour to state that, according to a telegram received from Mr. Monahan, the Vali says that he has obtained proof that the Armenian Commissary of Police both arranged and was present at the murder.

Mr. Monahan adds that as the Vali is hostile to the Commissary he will probably be sentenced to death.

I have, &c
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

No. 26.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(*Received April* 25.)

(No 244.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April* 19, 1898.

WITH reference to my despatch No. 239 of the 15th instant, I have the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis, containing further information respecting the recent murder of the Chief of Police of that place.

I have, &c.
Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 26.

Vice-Consul Monahan to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 3.)
Sir, *Bitlis, March* 25, 1898.

WITH reference to my telegrams Nos. 18, 20, and 23 of the 17th, 20th, and 24th instant respectively, I have the honour to report that early in the morning of the 17th instant Hilmi Bey, Chief of the Bitlis Police, was found dead in the street, near a brothel kept by an Armenian woman named Dilbero. His throat had been cut, his head smashed, and many knife or sword wounds were on his body. The brothel was empty, but Dilbero and three other Armenian women of the house were caught within three days of the murder, and are now in custody.

On the night of the 16th Hilmi Bey, who often visited this brothel not in his official capacity, sent a messenger to it to fetch the son of Dilbero, a youth named Kazar. The youth came, and Hilmi Bey and he went off together to the brothel. Kazar has disappeared, and it is not known where he went after the murder.

The four women have been secretly interrogated by the Vali, who tells me their story is that Hilmi Bey had been a short time in the house when seven or eight Armenian revolutionists forced their way in from the street, seized him, dragged him out, and murdered him. The names of two of the revolutionist, Simon and Mompré, were given by the women. They are both well-known men. Four rifle cartridges,

apparently from Russia, such as are known to be used by revolutionists, were found, having, it would seem, been dropped in the struggle.

The Vali further tells me the woman Dilbero stated that Thomas Effendi, an Armenian "commissaire," or officer of police, had, to her knowledge, been in communication with Simon. Thomas Effendi and his brother, a policeman, are in prison, but I have not ascertained what precise charge is being made against them.

No satisfactory trace of the seven or eight revolutionists seems to have been found. They are probably by this time in Russia or Persia.

Many Armenian houses have been searched, and six or seven Armenians, besides the four women and Thomas Effendi and his brother, are in prison on account of the affair.

There was much alarm on the 17th. No Armenian went to market or opened his shop on that day, but shops have since been opened every day as usual, and the town has remained quiet. The streets are patrolled by frequent guards, and some Mussulmans have been deprived of their knives. There is, however, much uneasiness among the population.

A Kurdish gentleman, a neighbour of mine, has been induced by the advice of of some Sheikhs to leave this mainly Christian quarter of the town, and move his household into a Mussulman quarter. Many Mussulmans think it would be well to wipe out the Armenians before vengeance for the murdering and plundering of 1895 can fall on themselves. Their thoughts are, however, so far as I can judge, vague, and not likely to lead to outrage for the presence. The soldiers here, who are mostly Kurds, do not inspire the Armenians with much confidence, but it is probably impracticable to get a better garrison.

I have urged the Armenian Bishop to do all he can to bring the revolutionists to justice. He had already advised the leading men of his community to help the Government to this end, and is, I believe, continuing to do so.

I have given the official version of the murder, but private information inclines me to think that, though undoubtedly committed by revolutionists, it may not have been done from entirely revolutionary motives.

The murdered Hilmi Bey was a somewhat dissolute person. Shortly before the murder he brought some charge against the father-in-law of the revolutionist Simon, and put him in prison, where he still remains, and he is believed to have had designs on Simon's wife, who lives in her father's house in Bitlis. It is said that Hilmi Bey and the Armenian "commissaire," Thomas Effendi, had frequent intercourse with Simon, who was often in the town, and that about a fortnight ago Hilmi Bey warned Simon to leave the town. The murder would thus seem to have been committed partly at least from jealousy.

It is not clear that Hilmi Bey was enticed into the brothel; and there is a story current that Simon and his companions did not force their way in, but only happened to be in the house, and that Simon alone actually perpetrated the murder. Hilmi Bey was, in Tahsin Pasha's time, an oppresser of Armenians, but has of late been thought rather friendly to them.

The evidence in the case is, of course, still incomplete, but the authorities would, perhaps, be glad to make the murder appear to be purely revolutionary.

I have, &c.
(Signed) J. H. MONAHAN.

No. 27.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(*Received April* 25.)

(No. 245.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April* 19, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul at Erzeroum, stating that 300 Armenians belonging to the Caza of Keghi are to be permitted to return to their employment in Constantinople.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 27.

Consul Graves to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 7.)
Sir, *Erzeroum, April 7, 1898.*

AMONG the provincial Armenians expelled from Constantinople after the massacre there in 1896, were a large number of working-men and domestic servants belonging to the Caza of Keghi. Their number was about 850, while about 400 more had been killed during the massacre, and as almost all of these men were the sole support of a family, for a year and a-half past several thousand Armenians of the district have been reduced to a state of extreme destitution, slightly tempered by such relief as our Committee has been able to afford them.

The Vali of Erzeroum has made repeated applications to the Porte for permission to be given to these people to return to Constantinople or to go to Smyrna or other large centres in search of work, and I am glad to report that his persistence has at last been rewarded by the receipt of a telegram from the Porte, informing him that 300 Armenians of Keghi are to be allowed to return to Constantinople.

This is, I believe, the first case in which such permission has been granted, and the Vali, fearing lest it should be withdrawn in case of any alleged abuse, has instructed the Kaimakam of Keghi to issue tezkerés only to men of known good character, and to pick them from the various villages of the caza, in proportion to population, so that the benefit may accrue equally to the whole district.

I have, &c.
(Signed) R. W. GRAVES.

No. 28

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received April 25.)

(No. 246.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April 19, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul at Erzeroum, giving details respecting the formation of the new Hamidié regiments.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 28.

Consul Graves to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 8.)
Sir, *Erzeroum, April 8, 1898.*

NOTICE having appeared in the Constantinople press of the formation of three more Hamidié regiments in this district, described as belonging to the Sevghiar-Pinian, Sheidanli, and Kazkanli tribes, I have been at some pains to ascertain the correct names and numbers of these regiments.

As far as I can learn, the 59th Regiment is being formed from the Pininash tribe and the 60th from the Sheidanli tribe, both of the Hekkiari, while the 61st is composed of a combination of the Kazkanli tribesmen of Reshid Bey with a small tribe known as Sevghiari, whose Chief is Osman Agha. Both of these tribes belong to the Caza of Passin, and Reshid Bey's Kazkanli are emigrants from Russian territory, where the bulk of that tribe still remains. A former attempt of Reshid Bey's to form a regiment was unsuccessful, and the commission of Lieutenant-Colonel which had been granted him was withdrawn His present success is the result of a long, and, I believe, costly visit to Constantinople, from which he has just returned.

I have, &c.
(Signed) R. W. GRAVES.

No. 29.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received April 25.)

(No. 248.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April 20, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul at Damascus, reporting the departure of the Vali for the Hauran.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 29.

Consul Richards to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 15.)
Sir, *Damascus, April 8, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to inform your Excellency that the Vali left Damascus yesterday morning by train for Mezerib, the terminal station on the Hauran Railway. his Excellency's object being to make a short tour of inspection through that district. Although Nazim Pasha had been contemplating for some time the desirability of making such a journey, yet there can be no doubt that he actually made up his mind to do so at very short notice indeed, possibly only twenty-four hours beforehand. What decided him as to the necessity for starting at once was the daily increasing impatience of the Mushir Abdullah Pasha at what he considers to be the Vali's unduly lenient and propitiatory treatment of the Druses of the Hauran. The Mushir has all along protested against the adoption of anything but the most repressive measures against the Druses, and, consequently, he never lets slip an opportunity of showing in his correspondence with his superiors in Constantinople that his policy is the right one, whereas that of the Vali is wrong.

As a matter of fact the Hauran has been remarkably quiet for the last four or five months—a state of things which is as highly agreeable as it is unusual, and one which is undoubtedly due to the wisely conciliatory attitude of the Vali in all matters which the somewhat turbulent and unmanageable inhabitants of that region, whether Druses, Hauranese (Moslems), or Bedawin, have seriously and really at heart.

This very tranquillity, however, seems to irritate the Mushir, possibly because it proves the Vali to have been in the right, and he eagerly seizes upon the most trifling incident, such as an act of brigandage (which in such a country is no infrequent occurrence), or a scuffle between a soldier and a Druse peasant, to send off alarmist telegrams to Constantinople demonstrating the urgent necessity for taking military action at once against the "rebels."

In order to prove the incorrectness of such information, the Vali has, I think, most wisely, gone to see the country himself and so to report on its real state and on that of its inhabitants.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. S. RICHARDS.

No. 30.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received April 25.)

(No. 249.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April 21, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Kharput, respecting the collection of taxes at Morenik and elsewhere.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 30.

Vice-Consul Fontana to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 14.)
Sir, *Kharput, March* 26, 1898.

I HAVE the honour herewith duly to return a notice from the Porte, stating that, according to the Vali's assertion, the tax-levy throughout this vilayet has been conducted with the greatest moderation, notably so in the villages of Chenil and Morenik.

My despatch No. 7, Confidential, of the 24th ultimo may perhaps suffice to show how gravely mistaken Raouf Bey's assertion is.

As to the two villages in question, I know of none in this neighbourhood called Chenil, and my telegram to your Excellency of the 12th January last alluded only to Shintil and Morenik.

Armenians of the latter village assure me that the officer and soldiers were withdrawn after collecting 2,000 piastres, and a few days after their withdrawal I heard that an Armenian zaptieh and Collector, named Garabet, had arrived there to collect further taxes.

Soon afterwards Avak Oglou Agob, of Morenik, accompanied by his brother and other Armenians, came and complained to me that he had been badly beaten by the said Garabet in presence of the Koja Bashi and the members of the Ikhtiar Medjissi, because, Agop said, having nothing to give the Collector, he had invited the latter to enter his house and take whatever he could find. A complaint was lodged with the Tahour-Agassi, but I do not know whether Garabet has been reprimanded. 7,000 piastres were claimed in all at Morenik, and 2,000 piastres collected by the soldiers, it appears, with the greatest difficulty.

An old Armenian from there came to inform me that his bed had been taken by them.

The head Armenian Collector at Chemish-Gheseh, also named Garabet, and whose treatment of widows was reported in my despatch No. 56 of the 27th December, 1897, was recently reproached by certain Christian Notables here by letter with the brutality he evinced in collecting taxes.

His reply, which was read to me, stated that he personally was not to blame, but the authorities, who forced him to act as he did, and his letter ended with a request for assistance to enable him to procure some other employment.

The Gregorian and Catholic Murakhass here would, I believe, indorse my opinion that the tax collection in this district has been purely and simply official spoilation.

I have, &c.
(Signed) R. A. FONTANA.

No. 31.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(*Received April* 25.)

(No. 251.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April* 21, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a Memorandum which I have received from the Sublime Porte respecting the treatment of villagers in the Vilayet of Bitlis.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 31.

Memorandum.

LE Gouverneur-Général du Vilayet de Bitlis, à qui les communications nécessaires avaient été faites à la suite du *pro-mémoria* de l'Ambassade de Sa Majesté Britannique, en date du 28 Février (v. s.), répond que les villageois honnêtes sont laissés libres de parcourir les diverses localités du vilayet. D'ailleurs, ceux de ces villageois qui désirent travailler trouveront de l'occupation dans les travaux de construction de routes qui seront entrepris cette année et auxquels un crédit de 8,000 à 10,000 livres a été affecté.

Le Vali ajoute que des mesures rigoureuses sont prises pour qu'aucun acte d'oppression ne se produise dans la province, mais qu'il n'en a pas moins renouvelé ses recommandations aux autorités des sandjaks et des districts pour les engager à aviser à des dispositions propres à assurer le maintien de l'ordre et de la sécurité publique dans leurs circonscriptions respectives.

Sublime Porte, le 18 *Avril*, 1898.

No. 32.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(*Received April* 25.)

(No. 253.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April* 21, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Van, respecting the formation of new Hamidieh regiments.

I have sanctioned the proposal made by Captain Elliot in this despatch, to return from his journey in Persia by way of Hekkiari and Shattakh.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 32.

Captain Elliot to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 13.)
Sir, *Van, March* 25, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to report that three more regiments of Hamidieh cavalry are being formed in this vilayet, and that more will shortly be formed. It is believed that the total number of these regiments will be raised to 100.

One of them is being raised among the Shidan tribe in Nordoust, and Omar Agha, an oppressive person, has been appointed its Kaïmakam; another among the Artooshi Kurds in Hekkiari, Kaïmakam, Hefsoollah Bey. The 3rd regiment is in that neighbourhood, but I have not yet learnt particulars.

Your Excellency is aware how regrettable is this increase in the number of these regiments, but in this particular instance it appears to me more than usually noteworthy, as I regard it as a menace to the Nestorians of Hekkiari on the one hand, and the Armenians of Shuttakh on the other.

If your Excellency approves, I propose to return from Persia through these districts, and will then submit a further report.

I have, &c.
(Signed) G. S. ELLIOT.

No. 33.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(*Received April* 25.)

(No. 254.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April* 21, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith copy of a notice which I have received from the Sublime Porte, embodying a report from the Vali of Bitlis respecting the trial of the murderers of Yusuf Yunan.

Your Lordship will observe that this notice is in reply to the representations on the subject made by me in May and December 1897, and not to those which I have made since the communication to this Embassy of the letter written by the murdered man

immediately before his death, and which formed the subject of my despatches Nos. 183, Confidential, of the 25th ultimo, and 225 of the 9th instant.

I have, &c.

(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 33.

Memorandum.

LE Gouverneur-Général du Vilayet de Bitlis, interpellé à propos du meurtre de Youssouf Younan, agent de la Société de Secours Anglaise, mentionné dans le *pro-memoriâ* et la note verbale de l'Ambassade de Sa Majesté Britannique en date du 19 Mai et 26 Décembre dernier, Nos. 69 et 145, répond que les nommés Abdoullah Youssouf Homda, Moustafa Mousa, et Emra (Elias) Homda ayant été reconnus comme auteurs de ce crime ont été, conformément au dernier paragraphe de l'Article 178 du Code Pénal, condamnés le 3 Janvier dernier (v. s.) à la peine de mort.

En ce qui concerne le droit civil, Youssouf Kara Lelle Effendi, fondé de pouvoir de la susdite Société, ayant intenté un procès de ce chef contre les individus précités par-devant le Tribunal Civil, celui-ci avait commencé le jugement de l'action, mais au jour fixé pour la solution de l'affaire le dit Youssouf Kara Lelle ne s'était pas présenté en personne ni par un mandataire, l'instance fut périmée par provision conformément à l'Article 112 du Code de Procédure Civil.

Le Vali ajoute que l'assertion comme quoi certaines influences agiraient en vue de protéger les coupables est dénuée de fondement et que si aucune décision n'est intervenue jusqu'à présent au sujet du droit civil, c'est parce que le fondé de pouvoir susmentionné n'a pas poursuivi l'affaire dont il s'agit.

Sublime Porte, le 18 Avril, 1898.

No. 34.

Mr. E. Atkin to Foreign Office.—(*Received April* 25.)

3, *Essex Court, Temple, London, April* 23, 1897.

Dear Sir,

THE inclosed letter may interest you in regard to the cases of (1) Yussuf Yunan, (2) Marash post-office robbery.

The Committee will act in accordance with Sir J. W. Whittall's suggestion in regard to the post-office robbery; but will continue to urge the recovery of £ T. 476 from the Porte *re* Yusuf Yunan.

Yours truly,

(Signed) EDWARD ATKIN

Inclosure in No. 34.

Sir J. W. Whittall to Mr. Atkin.

Constantinople, April 19, 1898.

Dear Mr. Atkin,

I AM rather confused at having to reply categorically to your letter. The following narration will enable you to understand what I mean:—

Mr. Peet, contrary to his own judgment, but on the pressure of Mr. Lee, who could not draw bills, sent £ T. 500 of relief money to him at Marash by post, and with the same weekly post sent the letter advising the remittance. Not having the usual telegram from Lee announcing the receipt of the money, Mr. Peet telegraphed on inquiry. Lee replied that he new nothing of the group, but, realizing that it had been sent, went to the Marash post-office and asked for it. The officials said the post was delayed by snow—a frequent occurrence.

The next post-day Lee went again and inquired, and was told the group had not arrived, but a small group of a few pounds having arrived for a lady who was associated with him in the work, he, as usual, gave his Turkish seal to the official to gum it and then affix it on the receipt for this small group. Just as he was going down the stairs the Postmaster called out to him and begged him to let him have the seal again as the

former impressions of the seal were too faint and it had to be done over again. Mr. Lee gave his seal and saw it affixed on what appeared to be the same Turkish document. The next week he claimed the group again, and was told by the Postmaster, "Why do you ask a second time? You received your group last week. Here is your receipt duly sealed, and my clerk is witness." Mr. Lee saw that he had been robbed, and at once brought a complaint, which went to the Vali at Aleppo, who, it seems, behaved properly.

The Consuls, British and American, also worked energetically, and Lee also referred the matter to us. We at once arranged to get both Her Majesty's Embassy and the American Legation to intervene, and we wrote long reports to both, demanding restitution of the money, punishment of the official, &c., all in the most energetic manner.

The post-office here in Constantinople, on being applied to by the Embassy, refused to restore the money, and showed the receipt for it sealed with Lee's seal. A Commission was appointed at Aleppo to examine the affair—I am told, indirectly, the Postmaster was dismissed—but we don't know yet whether the money will be restored. These affairs take time in Turkey.

Now comes an incident which explains our reticence in the matter. The group was insured with an English Company against robbery. Now we have always understood this robbery to mean robbery *en route* by brigands. We never understood it to mean "robbery by officials after reaching destination." The Company, however, on our representing the facts to it, generously agreed to pay us at once, but on condition that we should press for recovery, just as if we had never received the money. This condition we considered it only right to accept, and we have acted accordingly. Nobody but you and we here and the Company know that we have been paid. It is therefore, at all events in the present stage, not advisable that too much noise should be made over the affair, as, if it got to be known that we were no losers and the Insurance Company was the only plaintiff, there would be less chance of redress, and, moreover, our position would be more delicate.

You will see that the weak point in our case is the receipt with Lee's seal affixed not that I blame Mr. Lee, for I myself have often had to give my Turkish seal to officials to gum and affix to documents.

Now as regards the Yussuf Yunan affair, the only question open yet is whether Her Majesty's Embassy will, in addition to the £ T. 376, press for the payment of the £ T. 100, given to the family. The claim for the £ T. 376 was sent in so recently that we cannot expect a reply from the Turks for some time. It is clear that I can do no more about it for the present, nor can you, indeed, for, if asked in Parliament, Curzon will reply that the claim has been sent in, and that time is required.

Yours truly,

(Signed) J. W. WHITTALL.

P.S.—I have just seen Peet. He agrees with me that it would not be well for you to take any steps at present on *re* the £ T. 500 group. The last news is a letter received from Marash, stating that the Postmaster was dismissed by the Inspector sent for "breach of confidence," and is now in hiding. The Governor of Marash requested Lee to prosecute him criminally in the Turkish Court. Angell, the American Minister, wrote Peet yesterday that he had sent his Dragoman, accompanied by Fitz-Maurice, to inform the Director of Posts that he would not allow Lee to have anything to do with a Turkish Tribunal—that it was for the Turkish Government to prosecute, and the Government must refund the money, as it alone was responsible.

J. W. W.

No. 35.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(*Received April* 29.)

(No. 90.)

(Telegraphic.) P. *Constantinople, April* 20, 1898, *noon.*

H Ei Majesty's Vice-Consul at Van sent me yesterday the following telegram from Tabreez:—

"On arriving here on the 26th instant I found the reports which had reached me about the revolutionists to be exaggerated. Some two months since they began to assemble in Selmas; Persian troops were sent after them and they dispersed. Those

(by far the greater number) who were Russian subjects returned to Russia, and the few Persian or Turkish subjects took refuge here. They have not gone to the villages east and south of Urumia Lake, as has been stated. It would be well to urge the Persian Government to keep a careful watch on the frontier (which they seem disinclined to do), although there is little probability that any attempt on Van will be made this year.

"The Archbishop of the Nestorians remains in Persia, since his fear of Sheikh Sadik prevents him from returning to his See, which is in Turkish territory. This Sheikh is the only Kurd who is able to cause really serious annoyance to the Turkish Government, and they ought, in their own interest, to exile him; in fact, this seems really an important matter.

"Ali Riza Bey, Ottoman Consul at Khoi, is a most mischievous person.

"I should be obliged if your Excellency would communicate this telegram to the French Consul at Van and Her Majesty's Consul at Erzeroum.

"I am told here that the revolutionists have a plan to make use of Cyprus for the purpose of smuggling arms into Asiatic Turkey in order to create disturbances in the Zeitoun district."

No. 36.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 1.)

(No. 22.)
(Telegraphic.) P. *Constantinople, May 1, 1898, 12:30 P.M.*

I HAVE received this morning the following telegram from Her Majesty's Consul at Jeddah:—

"News has reached here of the beginning of a revolt in the Yemen, though I have received no report on the subject from the British Vice-Consul at Hodeida. It is said that one battalion has been destroyed, and that four more will leave Ras-el-Aswad to-morrow."

The Sublime Porte has denied the truth of certain rumours of this outbreak which have arrived here.

No. 37.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 2.)

(No. 256.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April 23, 1898.*

WITH reference to my despatch No. 78 of the 7th February last, I have the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul-General at Beyrout, stating that no further particulars are forthcoming respecting the Armenian girls said to be detained in Mussulman families at Lattakia.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 37.

Consul-General Drummond Hay to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 22.)
Sir, *Beyrout, April 12, 1898.*

WITH reference to your Excellency's despatch of the 12th February, which crossed my report of the 7th February, respecting the detention of certain Armenian girls in the Mussulman families in the district of Lattakia, I have the honour to inform your Excellency that further inquiries were made by the British Vice-Consul, who reported to me on the 8th instant that he had nothing further to add to the particulars already furnished.

I have, &c.
(Signed) R. DRUMMOND HAY.

No. 38.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 2.)

(No. 256.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April 23, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Sivas, containing an account of the progress in that vilayet of the work of relief among the Armenians.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 38.

Captain Maunsell to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 32.)
Sir, *Sivas, April 13, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to report that the money from the Armenian Relief Fund which your Excellency was good enough to allot to this vilayet is now finished.

The final distribution consisted of a sum of 345*l.* for purchase of seed corn for the various villages in the vicinity and at Divrik, Gevron, and Darende, this being by far the most suitable form of relief at the present time.

I have done my best to impress on the villagers that they must not expect continued contributions from the fund, but must endeavour to mutually help their poorer neighbours.

There are, however, in Sivas town a number of extremely poor widows and helpless people who suffered in the massacres, and who can do but little to gain a livelihood. Many of these came in from the surrounding villages, and they require occasional assistance to enable them to live.

I have given nothing to any man who asked for help but appeared able to work for their living, nor to able-bodied exiles and travellers, who seem to think the Consulate is placed here specially to help them.

In Gourun an abnormally large number of men were killed, and the widows and helpless people there, unable to work, amount to some 800 persons.

I may add, as a hopeful sign of mutual help among the Armenians, that the Committee, who preside over the Gourun weaving industry, have allotted 100*l.* from their profits to assist the poor of the place.

If such a sum could be spared, I would suggest to your Excellency that a further sum of 150*l.* be allotted to this vilayet from the fund for needs of the widows and very poor.

I propose, with your Excellency's sanction, to travel shortly in the direction of Azizie, and visit the cazas in the southern portion of the vilayet.

Also to visit Divrik and the Kizilbash Kurd country to the north of it.

Neither of these portions of the country have been visited by Her Majesty's Consuls for twenty years, and such visits have a very useful effect.

I have, &c.
(Signed) F. R. MAUNSELL.

No. 39.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 2.)

(No. 259.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April 27, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Diarbekir, reporting on the budget of that vilayet during the last three years.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure 1 in No. 39.

Vice-Consul Waugh to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 1.)

Diarbekir, April 4, 1898.

Sir,

I HAVE the honour to transmit the budget of this vilayet for the last three years.

The falling-off in the receipts in 1896 was due—

1. To a depreciation of £ T. 19,000 in the tithes.

> "Quippe ubi fas versum atque nefas,
> Tam multæ scelerum facies; non ullus aratro
> Dignus honos."

2. To the loss of the military exemption tax, the collection of which was out of the question immediately after "the events," and was subsequently suspended by Iradé for two years.

3. To other smaller diminutions of revenue.

Contrary to my expectation last year, the tithes already show a recovery.

But a further loss of £ T. 19,500 has been incurred by the exemption of the agricultural population from the income tax.

The two years' delay allowed for the military exemption tax will, I am informed, expire in ten months from now.

The increase in the expenditure is attributed to the appointment of new gendarmes, police, and tax collectors; but the items seem to me are not very trustworthy.

It will be noticed that the figures differ considerably from those given in my despatch No. 8 of the 5th April last year. It is impossible to vouch for accuracy.

The entire absence of revenue from the military exemption tax during the past two years shows the inaccuracy of the present figures; for this tax has been collected in several towns and districts which were not plundered.

The income tax, too, has been, and doubtless still is being, collected from the farmers in many districts; for orders to the contrary take time to filter through.

On the whole, however, I believe that the present figures give a fair idea of the budget of the vilayet.

The receipts are rather estimated than actual, a certain proportion of revenue being always in arrear.

Thus, during the past year, only £ T. 140,000 were actually collected, of which £ T. 18,000 were on account of arrears for former years, leaving the sum of £ T. 24,000 in arrear for the year 1897.

An order recently received from the Ministry of the Interior, and confirmed by telegram from the Ministry of Finance, makes the expenditure of this vilayet a first charge on the revenue.

There is only one month of salary owing now for the financial year 1313, which terminated on the 13th March; the zaptiehs have six months due to them, but on account of former years.

The "havaleés" issued last year from various sources on the revenues of this vilayet were so heavy that only 40 per cent. of them could be met of the surplus revenue.

In the vilayet expenditure is not included the estimated cost of administration of the new nahiés, which has not yet been sanctioned from Constantinople.

There are forty-seven nahiés, which require a credit of 250 piastres monthly, salary for the Mudir, 150 piastres for his Secretary, and, in addition, the cost of the extra police to be provided.

At present the new Mudirs are serving unpaid.

I have, &c.

(Signed) A. T. WAUGH.

Inclosure 2 in No. 39.

Budget for the Vilayet of Diarbekir for the Years 1311–1313 (1895–1897).

Receipts.	1895.	1896.	1897.
	£ T.	£ T.	£ T.
Income tax ("temettu")	23,471	23,844	4,864*
Land tax	26,232	25,600	25,000
Military exemption tax	11,071	↑	↑
Tithes	69,519	56,545	56,936
Sheep tax	46,163	43,672	48,607
Various	16,399	12,270	10,848
Total	193,858	156,931	146,375

Expenditure.	1895.	1896.	1897.
	£ T.	£ T.	£ T.
	62,097	72,241	79,499
N.B.—The increase due to new gendarmes, police, and tax collectors.			
Items:			
Gendarmerie	12,425	24,875	31,386
Police	1,102	2,783	3,674
Tax collectors	..	..	2,394

* Income tax on farmers remitted.

† Not collected.

No. 40.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 2.)

(No. 260.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April 27, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Diarbekir, respecting an official reconciliation recently effected between two powerful Kurdish Chiefs.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 40.

Vice-Consul Waugh to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 2.)
Sir, *Diarbekir, April 6, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to report that an official reconciliation has been effected by the Vali between two powerful Kurdish Chiefs, whose feud was very prejudicial to the settled population of the Jezireh district.

Mohammed Aga-i-Sar, the Red Aga, is a Chief of great local influence, and of relatively good reputation. His people are numerous, and inhabit the borders of the Jezireh Caza and the Bitlis Vilayet. He has refused proposals to have his men enrolled in the Hamidich cavalry.

Mutafa Pasha, his rival, on the contrary, was glad to purchase indulgence for his numerous misdeeds by acquiring the status of a Hamidich Commander some years ago.

The feud between the two is long-standing. Mustafa had to pass through the Red Aga's country on his way from his summer pastures in the Bitlis hills to his winter quarters on the Mesopotamian Plain. Last autumn passage was refused him, although accompanied by an officer with a Government force.

Forced to make a long detour, Mustafa retaliated by plundering several of the Red Aga's villages. The affair reached serious proportions, and the Vali obtained an order from Constantinople for the two Chiefs to come here and have their differences adjusted.

Some delay was caused by the Marshal, Zeki Pasha, omitting to communicate the order to Mustafa Pasha, who, in his quality of commissioned officer, can only take orders from Erzinghian.

Last week, however, Mustafa arrived, and found the Red Aga here awaiting him.

They embraced in the Vali's presence, and a formal Treaty of Peace has been signed, sealed, and delivered, and copies sent to Constantinople.

I have, &c.
(Signed) A. T. WAUGH.

No. 41.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 2.)

(No. 261.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April 27, 1898.*

WITH reference to my despatch No. 588 of the 2nd September, 1897, I have the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul at Damascus, reporting the return of the Vali from the Hauran.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 41.

Consul Richards to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 16.)
Sir, *Damascus, April 15, 1898.*

WITH reference to my previous despatch No. 15 of the 8th instant, reporting the departure of the Vali for the Hauran, I have now the honour to inform your Excellency that Nazim Pasha has just returned from his expedition, which has been very much shorter than was expected.

It appears that he went as far south as Ajloun, which, however, lies on the western, or rather south-western, borders of the Hauran, whereas it was expected that his journey would rather take the opposite or eastern direction, seeing that it is on that, the Jebel Druse side, that his presence was required.

It is true that he is reported to be intending to make another journey next week, when Salkhad, a somewhat important township to the south of the Jebel Druse, will be his ultimate destination, but it appears to me somewhat improbable that he should leave Damascus again so soon.

I might mention in this connection that it is intended to remove the seat of Government of the Mutessarif of the Hauran from Sheikh Sáad, where it now is, to Sheikh Miskin, a village of some importance situated about three-fourths of the way down the Hauran line.

In view of the fact that most of the Government officials of that sandjak live at Sheikh Sáad, it is proposed to make a short branch line connecting the two places, though whether this project is to be carried out by the Government or the Hauran Railway Company is not quite clear.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. S. RICHARDS.

P.S.—I have just seen Nazim Pasha, and he assures me that there is not the slightest ground for the statements that are constantly being made in certain quarters to the effect that the Hauran is in a disturbed state.

His Excellency also informed me that he had seen a numerous deputation of Druses at Sheikh Meskin, and had promised them to visit the Jebel Druse shortly. Indeed, he added that he would have done so on this occasion had not business of importance necessitated his return to Damascus. He hopes, however, to be able to make a second expedition before long.

W. S. R.

No. 42.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 2.)

(No. 262.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April 28, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Kharput, reporting changes of officials in that vilayet.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 42.

Vice-Consul Fontana to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 17.)
Sir, *Kharput, April 11, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to report to your Excellency that Khalid Effendi, a graduate of the Imperial Civil School at Constantinople, has been appointed Kaimakam to the Charsanjak Caza, of which Hassan Bey, ex-Mudir of Aghun, referred to in my despatches Nos. 27 of the 7th June and No. 43 of the 23rd September, 1897, has hitherto been Deputy-Kaimakam.

Armenians from the said district express their satisfaction with the manner in which Hassan Bey has invariably treated the Christians under his control, and regret that he has not been confirmed in his present office.

The Tahour Agasi, "Sari" Mehmet Effendi, whose action at the time of the disturbances here, and whose corruption and treatment of Armenians in connection with tax collection have been referred to by me in several despatches to your Excellency, has been transferred to Kara-Hissar in the Vilayet of Sivas, and replaced at Kharput by Bahri Effendi, a younger officer.

The Assistant Public Prosecutor, an Albanian named Shevket Effendi, was invited to resign upon pretext of his having made use of language disloyal to the Sultan, and he has now left for Constantinople. He has been temporarily replaced by Hadji Mehmet Effendi, generally termed the "Deli Khoja," whose peculiarities were specified in my despatch No. 54, Confidential, of the 15th December, 1897.

I have, &c.
(Signed) RAPHAEL A. FONTANA.

No. 43.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 2.)

(No. 263.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April 28, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul at Damascus, concerning the disagreements between rival factions in the Greek Orthodox community in that city.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 43.

Consul Richards to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 18.)
Sir, *Damascus, April 16, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to inform your Excellency that a disturbance took place yesterday evening in the chief Greek Orthodox Church here which, thanks to the prompt intervention of the police and even of the military, had no serious consequences. It appears that the cause of the disturbance was a disagreement between what is known as the "native" party and those who are termed "Greeks" proper as to what part of the service should be intoned in Greek and what in Arabic, the vast majority of the congregation being able to understand the latter language only. Several blows were given and received by the partisans of the rival factions, and some persons seem to have been roughly handled; but the matter ended there, and so would have been hardly worth reporting to your Excellency were not its occurrence symptomatic of the tension to which the long-delayed election of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch has undoubtedly given rise. As, I believe, I have explained in a previous despatch, the Ottoman authorities are strongly in favour of the election of a Greek candidate for the Patriarchal throne, whether he be from Constantinople itself, which of course would be preferred, or from some diocese in the Province of Antioch. This is also the desire of the Greek party. On the other hand those who are termed natives insist that the new Patriarch should be a Syrian, the very idea of the possibility of his being a Greek (not, of course, a Hellene, which is quite out of the question) from Constantinople being extremely repugnant to them. This party is supposed to have marked Russophil proclivities, which accounts for the strenuous opposition which its members encounter in Turkish official circles where it is calculated that a Greek, if elected to the Patriarchate would be far less likely to show subservience to Russian views and schemes.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. S. RICHARDS.

No. 44.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 2.)

(No. 264.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April 28, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Sivas, respecting the recent movements of the military forces in that vilayet.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 44.

Captain Maunsell to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 33.)
Sir, *Sivas, April 16, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to report that one squadron of the 20th Regiment of regular cavalry (strength 100 men) has been moved from Tokat to Shabin Kara-Hissar, there to be quartered. They passed through here *en route* on the 12th instant.

I can trace no definite reason for this movement, except that it may be the commencement of a concentration in the direction of Erzinghian.

Or else it may be to assist in the formation and instruction of the new Hamidieh cavalry regiment being raised in the Kochkiri Caza, a short distance south of Kara-Hissar.

With reference to this latter regiment, I hear that the Government commenced about a week ago buying horses for these Kurds: who do not seem to have sufficient to mount themselves.

This is being done quite secretly up to the present.

I have, &c.
(Signed) F. R. MAUNSELL.

No. 45.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 2.)

(No. 266.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April 28, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a telegram which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis, respecting the case of the Alai Bey of that place who is now on trial for exciting insubordination.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 45.

Vice-Consul Monahan to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 31.)
(Telegraphic.) P. *Bitlis, April 26, 1898.*

I HEAR that the Alai Bey of Bitlis is now awaiting his trial at Erzeroum, the Vali having accused him of exciting insubordination. It will be remembered that he was recalled to Constantinople at the instance of the same official three weeks since in consequence of a disagreement respecting the non-payment of the salaries due to the gendarmerie.

No. 46.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(*Received May 9.*)

(No. 268.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, April 30, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul at Damascus, reporting the desertion from their regiments and return to their homes in the Hauran of Druse soldiers.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 46.

Consul Richards to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 19.)
Sir, *Damascus, April 18, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to inform your Excellency that I hear, on what I believe to be reliable authority, that within the last fifteen months some 830 Druses who had been forced into military service (what is known as "aujiyé," or compulsory service) have deserted), some from Crete, others from Tripoli in Barbary, and returned to their homes in the Hauran.

It is calculated that some 300 Druse soldiers have died during the same period, and that about 270 are still serving in the places above mentioned, making a total of 1,400 men who have been forced to serve in the Ottoman ranks, the great majority of them being from the Jebel Druse.

I might mention in this connection that I hear from a traveller who has recently traversed the Hauran, and more especially the Jebel Druse, that he not unfrequently noticed signs of suppressed excitement and mental perturbation among the Druses through whose country he passed, many of whom appeared to be anxiously expecting the arrival of some emissaries from without.

I should add, however, that I am not disposed to attach any great importance to the statement, because my informant, though a keen observer, has only a very rudimentary knowledge of Arabic, and may easily have misunderstood what he heard.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. S. RICHARDS.

No. 47.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(*Received May 9.*)

(No. 273.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, May 3, 1898.*

WITH reference to my telegram No. 90 of the 29th April, repeating a telegram received from Captain Elliot from Tabreez, I have the honour to report that I have heard through Her Majesty's Minister at Tehran that the Persian troops which had been sent to Selmas have been withdrawn from the frontier.

Sir Mortimer Durand has been informed by the Consul-General at Tabreez that it is improbable that the revolutionists will return; but he approves of a suggestion of Captain Elliot that a small military post should be established in each purely Armenian village where revolutionists are in the habit of assembling, and he will see what can be done to give effect to this suggestion.

I have, &c
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

No. 48.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(*Received May 9.*)

(No. 276.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, May 5, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Kharput respecting the distribution of relief in that vilayet.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 48.

Vice-Consul Fontana to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 18.)
Sir, *Kharput, April 19, 1898.*

WITH reference to my telegram of the 7th and your Excellency's telegram of the 14th January last, regarding the distribution of relief to distressed Armenians, I now have the honour to report that, in obedience to your Excellency's instructions, I lost no time in forming a local Relief Commission and in setting them to work.

The Commission was composed of three Armenians—the Municipal Doctor, who is a Protestant, the Catholic Deputy Muraklass and a Gregorian named Mogherditch Effendi—all three persons of good character and ability. They elected two experienced men—a Protestant and a Gregorian—to make the tour together of the sixty-four villages in this district, and there write lists: (1) of the indigent and friendless widows and orphans; (2) of families or unemployed individuals absolutely needing immediate aid.

The two emissaries seem to have performed their task extremely well, and thanks to the good-will and harmony existing among the members of the Commission, the sum of 500*l.* assigned for the relief of the entire district referred to has been distributed with complete impartiality, has been made the most of, and has passed into the hands only of the most friendless and notably indigent among the peasantry.

General approval has been expressed at the manner in which the Commission have done their work, and the Vali has also signified to me his appreciation thereof.

There remained, after relief had been distributed to the sixty-four villages and after deducting the wage, horse-hire, and personal expenses of the two emissaries, a balance of 1,896 piastres for the relief of the very numerous poor at Mezreh.

In the prison here, where over 200 Turks and Christians are at present confined, thirty-one men were found to be in the greatest need, and the Commission decided to assign 500 piastres for their relief, which sum was accordingly distributed among them. The balance in hand thus fell to 1,396 piastres.

Lists were then written by the Muraklass of the poorest Armenians at Mezreh, reaching a total of no less than 500 persons, owing to the presence of numerous refugees from distant towns and villages who flocked hither during the winter in the hope of finding shelter and a little food, with subsequent employment in the spring. The lists in question were, however, upon the initiative of the Commission, reduced to 300 persons.

The sum of 1,396 piastres not sufficing for the relief of so many, I suggested to the Armenian Notables at Mezreh, of whom by no means a few are in a position to give without inconvenience, that they should raise among themselves a subscription to the amount of £ T. 15 or £ T. 20, which, together with the money remaining in the Commission's hands, would suffice for the relief of their own 300 poor at the rate of about 10 piastres a-head, meaning, in the case of widows with several children, 40 or 50 piastres to each family, and so sufficient for their immediate needs. The Notables were unwilling, however, to entertain my suggestion. I therefore called upon the Vali, explained the matter to him, and asked for his assistance. I said that I had endeavoured to start a collection by contributing myself, invited him to join me in contributing and to use his influence among the Notables with a view to their raising the sum so urgently needed by their own poor.

Raouf Bey at once consented, gave a liberal contribution, and called up the principal Notables and advised them to follow his example. This they did—although by no means liberally—and within a few days 1,700 piastres were collected, including

donations from the Muavin and Defter-Dar. That sum, together with the balance referred to, will now suffice for the object in view.

My sincere thanks are due to the Vali for his liberality and for the salutary influence he exercised among the Armenian Notables in this matter. Without his moral assistance there would have remained little hope of providing for the 300 destitute inscribed in the Murakhass' list.

I also have the honour to report that although nearly three months have passed since the distribution—now terminated—commenced, I have not, so far, heard of a single instance of relief money having been taken for taxes.

I have, &c.
(Signed) RAPHAEL A. FONTANA.

No. 49.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 10.)

(No. 279.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, May 6, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul at Jerusalem reporting the precautions taken by the local authorities to prevent any possible disturbances during the Easter festivals.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 49.

Consul Dickson to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 15.)
Sir, *Jerusalem, April 22, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to report to your Excellency that the various religious ceremonies in connection with the celebration of Easter by the different sects in this city passed off this year without any unusual incident, and that the public tranquillity was not disturbed.

As not only the Easter festivals of the Greek and Latin Churches, but also the Jewish Passover and the Mahommedan religious ceremony of the "Nebi Mousa" (the pilgrimage to the Tomb of Moses) all occurred within a few days of each other, fears were entertained that some of the sects concerned might, during the performance of these ceremonies, come into collision with one another and thus bring about a disturbance. Every precaution was accordingly taken by the local authorities. As many troops as possible were summoned from Jaffa, Gaza, and other parts of the Mutessariflik, to Jerusalem; a squadron of cavalry arrived from Nablous, and 150 men of the "Nizam" or regular troops were sent from Beirout in the "stationnaire" "Ismail," and disembarked at Jaffa on the 9th instant, reaching Jerusalem the same afternoon. Notwithstanding, however, the large concourse of pilgrims and tourists who had assembled in Jerusalem this year during the two holy weeks of the Latin and Greek Churches, no untoward incident took place, and order and tranquillity were maintained. Some fears were entertained that especially during the celebration of the religious service in connection with the "holy fire" on the 16th instant an affray might occur in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which was expected to be unusually crowded this year, but the ceremony passed off quite quietly.

The number of Russian pilgrims who visited Jerusalem this year has been very large, and during the Greek holy week there were considerably over 4,000 residing in this city. The Russian Palestine Society was unable to provide them all with lodgings and extra sheds, capable of holding about 1,000 pilgrims, were hastily built in the grounds of the Society for their accommodation. At one time there was a rumour current that two Russian transports with troops on their way to the Far East would stop at Jaffa, so as to enable the men to visit Jerusalem during the Easter festival, but on my making inquiries of my Russian colleague as to the truth of this report he informed me that, although he knew that such a report was in circulation, he had received no official confirmation of it, and the result proved that

there was no foundation for it. The spread of the rumour, however, caused some sensation in this city.

The pilgrims and visitors are now gradually dispersing, and the troops are being sent back to various stations, whence they had been summoned to Jerusalem.

I have, &c.
(Signed) JOHN DICKSON.

No. 50.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 16.)

(No. 283.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, May 10, 1898.*

WITH reference to my despatch No. 244 of the 13th ultimo, I have the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis, containing further details respecting the murder of the Chief of Police in that town.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 50.

Vice-Consul Monahan to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 4.)
Sir, *Bitlis, April 16, 1898.*

WITH reference to my despatch No. 3 of the 25th ultimo and to my telegram No. 29, I have the honour to report that the Vali now says he thinks there were probably no Armenian revolutionists concerned in the murder of Hilmi Bey. He says that the guilt of the Armenian Commissary of Police, Thomas Effendi, is clear, that at the bottom of the affair there may have been some Mussulmans, including his own and Hilmi Bey's personal enemy Hajji Nejm-ed-Din, and that the cartridges which were found and the story about revolutionists may have been a device to mislead the authorities.

Kazar, the Armenian youth who lived in the brothel, and who disappeared after the murder, was caught three weeks ago, and continual secret examination of him and of the four women has been carried on by the Vali. There are fifteen other persons, all Armenians, in prison in connection with the affair, making a total of twenty; but none of the fifteen seem to have given information of much importance. Some other persons, who are not in prison, have been examined, but with one exception have thrown little or no light on the affair. That exception is Mino, an Armenian youth, who, as the Vali tells me, stated that he was sent by Thomas Effendi on that night to find Hilmi Bey and send him to the brothel, and that the latter sent him there to fetch Kazar (see my despatch No. 3).

Kazar stated that he fled with the seven revolutionists on the night of the murder, that he afterwards left them near Bitlis where they had been hiding in a cavern, and that he then came back to the town where he was caught. The Vali says he doubts the truthfulness of these statements of Kazar.

According to the Vali, the women have changed their story, and now state that the seven revolutionists were introduced into the brothel by Thomas Effendi and were and had for three days been in it when Hilmi Bey entered it on the night of the murder. Statements of the women and of Kazar, as reported to me by the Vali, clearly show that Thomas Effendi conspired with the revolutionists and enticed Hilmi Bey into the house by the promise that he would find there a certain woman, and was present at, if he did not take an active part in, the murder in the adjacent field into which Hilmi Bey fled from his assailants.

The apparent seriousness of the case against Thomas Effendi has increased in a remarkable manner since my first conversation with the Vali. His statement of evidence against Thomas Effendi was short and vague on that occasion, but it has since become more and more definite.

Thomas Effendi was the protégé and constant companion of Hilmi Bey, and it is not easy to imagine an adequate motive for his supposed plot to murder him.

It is said that the Vali has been embittered against Thomas Effendi by the other Armenian Commissary, the Catholic Murad, an intriguing enemy of Thomas. The Vali, in regard not only to this murder, but to other matters also, talks as though he were haunted by an idea of the ever active wickedness of Hajji Nejm-ed-Din. Of the connection of the latter with the murder there seems to be no evidence of any weight; though the story that the revolutionist lived for three days in the brothel certainly seems improbable, and the supposition is not in itself improbable that the rifle cartridges may have been left by some one with a dead body with a purpose.

The affair remains wrapped in secrecy and intrigue, and it would perhaps be well that the public trial of Thomas Effendi, which may soon come on, and which seems likely to result in his conviction [illegible] should be carefully watched.

I have, &c.

(Signed) J. H. MONAHAN.

No. 51.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 16.)

(No. 282.)

My Lord. *Constantinople, May 10, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Sivas, reporting the abduction of Armenian girls in that vilayet.

On the receipt of Captain Maunsell's telegram, mentioned in the first paragraph of this despatch, I addressed a *pro-memoriâ* to the Sublime Porte on the subject, and I have now instructed Mr. Block to insist that a proper investigation of these cases should be made.

I have, &c.

(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 51.

Captain Maunsell to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 31.)

Sir. *Sivas, April 27, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to report as follows regarding the abduction of Armenian girls in this vilayet, regarding which I have already informed your Excellency by telegraph.

The case of the first girl, wife of Artin Karakezian, has already been referred to in my despatch No. 23 of the 14th February last.

The re-trial of the men who abducted her from Yarhissar, but who were acquitted by the Court of the First Instance has been commenced in the Court of Appeal.

The original trial has been quashed; all the evidence given in the Kaimakam's original report has been sent for; the trial is now adjourned, but there is little hope, with the present Vali at the head of affairs, of having them punished.

The husband, Artin Karakezian, now called Ali, who only accepted Islamism because he thought his wife would be restored to him, was sent to a "tekke" to be instructed in the Mahommedan religion.

He escaped from there, and stayed in the house of an Armenian in the town; from there he went to the Government House and saw the Vali, who urged him strongly to renounce his wife.

The Vali shortly after took him into his own house, where he still remains, practically a prisoner.

To-day he got out, under pretence of going to the market, and came to the Consulate.

Every effort is being made to get him to renounce his wife, and he has been offered a post as "chaoush" on the public road works in the neighbourhood of Amasia, solely in order to get him away from this town.

His wife is kept closely shut up in the house of Nourri Bey, a Notable of Sivas and a member of the Court of Appeal, who will try her case.

I have managed to communicate with her, and she states, when free from restraint, that she wishes to return to her husband and the Christian religion.

In February last, at a village called Chepni, in the Caza of Charkishla, two Armenian girls were forcibly abducted and converted.

One, named Eran, the mother of two children, and wife of an Armenian named Humparsun, was for some time shut up in the village Imam's house, but was eventually brought to Sivas, and shut up in the house of Ibrahim Effendi Chekem Zade, an extremely fanatical Notable of this town.

The second girl from Chepni, named Kuver, also married, was carried off to the house of Kara Osman Oghlu, a rich Mahommedan of the village, where she still remains.

The news of these abductions only reached Sivas a month later, owing to the severe weather; the Kaimakam, however, sent a Police Commissioner, who arrested seven Turks, and imprisoned them at Charkishla.

The Vali, on the news arriving here, sent a special police officer to investigate and take evidence.

On his return, the evidence in the case of the girl Eran was sent over for me to read.

There were several witnesses to the abduction, but as in many points the evidence was unsatisfactory, and the girl had not been allowed to see a priest, I requested that further inquiries be made.

As regards the case of the second girl, Kuver, no evidence at all was apparently taken.

She remains shut up in the house of Kara Osman, who settled the matter by bribing the police officials and others who should have seen the case was properly investigated.

A second Commission of Inquiry, consisting of one Turkish and one Armenian Commissioner was now sent down, but they returned, having annulled all the former evidence, and stated that the girl's evidence was entirely voluntary.

I hear subsequently from the villagers this was owing to the action of the Armenian Commissioner, who induced his compatriots who were witnesses to the abduction to change their evidence by telling them that the country was likely soon to be much disturbed, as the reserves were soon to be called, and they might subsequently suffer greatly.

The seven prisoners who were at Charkishla have have now been released.

On the 6th April news arrived that another girl, named Marie, had been abducted in the village of Borandere by Khankori, son of Mehemet Bey, a Circassian Notable of the village.

The Vali did not make any further inquiries into this case, as he informed me the girl had voluntarily become Moslem, and that Khankori had married her.

I may mention that this latter is a well-known bad character, having only recently completed a sentence of three years' imprisonment.

On the 7th April I telegraphed to your Excellency on the subject, and since then I have continued my representations to the Vali.

On the 22nd instant he sent to me saying he was sure I had mistaken information this subject, and that the girls in the houses of Nourri Bey and Ibrahim Effendi were not really forced converts and virtually prisoners, as I had so frequently insisted, but that they were perfectly free to go where they liked.

To prove this, I could name any person I wished to go to Ibrahim Effendi's house and interrogate the girl.

Hoping to gain some further information regarding the girl, usually so securely guarded, I consented, and an American missionary lady, of twenty-five years' experience in the country, kindly undertook the task.

She was admitted, with another woman from Chepni, to identify, into a private room, and interviewed the girl without any Moslems being present.

At first the girl protested that she was a Mahommedan, but it was obvious that she was completely terrorized.

After being promised protection if she left this house and came to the missionary building, she willingly consented to come, hoping again to see her husband and children and to return to the Christian religion.

Next day I went to the Vali, and told him the girl was quite willing to go to the missionaries' house, and as he had repeatedly said she was free to go where she liked, he would doubtless direct her being sent over there as soon as possible.

He gave permission, requesting me to send the missionary lady again down to receive her.

I went to arrange this. The lady could rather soon [illegible] was admitted to the house, and found Ibrahim Effendi [illegible] she was witness of him standing in front of the unfortunate girl, shouting and threatening her if she dared to return to Christianity or to leave his house.

On turning and seeing the lady, he, of course, became submissively polite.

He declined, however, to hand over the girl unless she came to the konak to see the Vali.

It seems that immediately after I left the Vali had altered all his plans, under pressure of the Cadi and Ibrahim Effendi himself, who had hurriedly arrived.

On the girl being brought up to the konak and questioned, she still persisted in her wish to go to the missionaries' house if he would only give her permission; but he refused on the quibble that he could not send a Mahommedan to a Christian house.

She was then returned to the [illegible] Effendi.

The Vali then sent the "mektoubji" over to the Consulate to inform me that he had released the girl, she did not wish to go, and he was unable to force her.

I told the "mektubji" that these statements, with the fact of which I had certain knowledge, and that if I had any doubts on the question previously, I was now absolutely certain that the girl was a Moslem solely by force and intimidation.

To-day the girl has been duly accepted as a Mahommedan, a venal Armenian priest being found, and the usual solemn comedy of renunciation being gone through.

The villagers of Chepni, both Christian and Mahommedan, have been watching this case carefully. I have heard from good sources that a large number of the Christian inhabitants intend to become Moslems in order to save their wives and daughters.

The last case of the girl [illegible] Sivas, is certain to be also asking for advice and help. The best way to put a stop to [illegible] if he wished to regain his wife.

I told him that he was wrong in supposing that my action in the matter had ceased and that nothing remained but for him to become a Moslem.

I said that I was still at work on his case, and that it was by no means settled.

He promised me not to do anything without my knowledge.

I have to-night dispatched a man to Chepni, which is three days' distant, to tell the Headman on no account to give up hope and become Moslem; that I was still at work on their case.

The man Artin Karakezian has promised not to accept work on the roads near Amasia, and thus allows himself to be exiled from Sivas and practically renounce all hopes of getting his wife.

I have gone into this case in some detail in order to show to your Excellency the weak and vacillating character of the Vali, and the danger to the peace of the vilayet if he neither sanctions these forcible conversions and abductions.

He endeavours on the one hand to accede to the Consuls' wishes, while on the other he is easily swayed by whatever set of the fanatical Notables of the town tell him.

I understand that for a certain period after the massacres there were definite orders issued from the Sublime Porte that these forcible conversions were not to be accepted.

I would respectfully beg to suggest that these orders might now be repeated, as otherwise I feel sure that further outrages will take place.

I have, &c.

(Signed) F. R. MAUNSELL.

No. 52.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 16.)

(No. 287.)

Constantinople, May 12, 1898.

My Lord,

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis respecting brigandage and lawlessness in that vilayet.

I have &c.

(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 52.

Vice-Consul Monahan to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 5.)

Bitlis, April 22, 1898.

Sir,

I HAVE the honour to report that, with the melting of the snow, brigandage in the vilayet has, as was expected, recommenced during the last four or five weeks, but has not yet this year attained very alarming proportions.

Four weeks ago brigands, said to be Modeki Kurds, plundered a caravan on the Saïrt road, taking 250 liras worth of silk. The Vali tells me the silk has been all recovered and the brigands apprehended, but I have some reason to doubt the accuracy of his statements.

On the night of the 6th instant, thirteen Modeki Kurds came to Markork, a small Armenian village 5 miles from Bitlis, and wounded a villager, but, having got six medjidiés, departed. Markork had this year received 3 or 4 liras of relief money. Gendarmes were sent to the village on the 7th, but left it on the 8th, having seen no Kurds, and having, according to Markork Armenians, done nothing but consume some of the villagers' food and forage.

On the night of the 8th the same thirteen, with three more Modeki Kurds, came again to Markork and demanded 5 liras more, and carried off ten villagers to the mountain till the money should be paid. The captives, however, were let go on the 10th, 9 medjidiés having with much difficulty been raised and paid over.

On the night of the 6th the same Modeki Kurds carried off some movables from an Armenian village Humbulchur, near Markork.

The Modekilis have sent a message to Parkhant, a large Armenian village within 3 miles of Bitlis, which has received relief lately, demanding 5 liras; but nothing has come of it yet.

On the 20th instant Modekilis came to the Kurdish village Surem, near Markork, but seem to have met with resistance from the villagers and to have gone off without any plunder on the appearance of some cavalry from Bitlis.

With regard to Markork, the Vali tells me that he suspects the whole story to be a fabrication, that his own personal enemy, Hajji Nejm-ed-Din (see my despatch No. 4 of the 16th instant), is in some mysterious way in league with the Modekilis and the Christian villagers, and that the gendarmes sent to Markork found that nothing had happened, were told as much by the villagers themselves, and were asked by them to go back to Bitlis. Kurdish Modeki, being now an independent lawless mountain district of about 3,000 inhabitants whom the Turkish authorities seem to intend to let alone, I have thought it useless to pursue in conversation with the Vali the subject of their depredations, which so far this year have been, comparatively speaking, not very serious.

Thinking that it may be of some interest, I send herewith a translation from the Kurdish of a song which is now sung on the Modeki mountain,* commemorating the encounter of last summer, in which the Alai Bey (Chief of Gendarmerie) and four officers and three sergeants of gendarmerie were killed.

From an informant who has excellent opportunities of knowing the facts, and is, so far as I can judge, thoroughly trustworthy, I learn that Rizakh Agha (see my despatch No. 61 of the 24th November, 1896, and No. 4 of the 6th February, 1897, and Mr. Crow's despatch No. 27 of the 10th October, 1897), the notorious Hamidié Major in Malasgird Caza, within the last four weeks killed in his own village, Casmi,

* Not printed.

two Armenians, one of them for refusing to give him his son's wife for the first night after marriage, and the other for some unknown reason.

I have, however, heard of practically no plundering this year by Kurds except by the Modekilis.

The Vali, though he endeavours to explain away or minimize specific instances of Kurdish lawlessness, is, in his general tone, despondent in regard to the prospects of the vilayet, and so, to an extreme degree, is my neighbour, a Kurdish gentleman, the representative of one of the chief Kurdish families of Bitlis, the Sheref Khans who formerly ruled here. He has lost much of his fortune and of his influence over the Kurds, but is generally considered to be the only honest prominent Kurd in this town. He was sent to try and govern Modeki last September (see Mr. Crow's telegram No. 62 of the 6th September, 1897), but returned two months later, having given up the hopeless task, and is now a member of the Administrative Council of the vilayet. His continual theme is the blessing that it would be for the vilayet to be [illegible] by a foreign government, even by Russia. [I report his views most confidentially.] I may mention that, unlike another Kurdish neighbour of mine, see my despatch No. 3 of the 25th ultimo), he refused to leave this Christian quarter of the town when [illegible] to do so during the excitement which followed the murder of the Chief of Police.

Indeed, considering that the Armenian villagers are now not allowed to leave the vilayet, and that they enjoy little or no security for their property, there are strong grounds for fearing that the vilayet may become an unbearable scene of poverty and disorder during the summer.

The Vali says he will relieve a great number of poor people by giving them work on roads—an excellent plan if he can find money to carry it out. He is very energetic in exacting the sheep tax, but I do not hear much of oppressive tax collecting. He repeatedly tells me he is thwarted in all his efforts for good government by the intriguing influential Musulman friends of this town, and his complaints of Zeki Pasha and the Hamidiés are well known to your Excellency.

The reorganization of the Kurds, which, considering their ingenuity, is remarkable, affords some hope that the Turkish Government may continue to work without collapse, but from the little that I have been able to learn it seems that anarchy throughout most of this vilayet, even before this year is over, would not be very surprising.

I have, &c.
(Signed) J. H. MONAHAN.

P.S.—Since writing the above I learn from a trustworthy informant who has just arrived from Boulanik (Mush Sandjak) that two serious cases of cattle lifting by Hamidiés have just occurred in that Caza.

J. H. M.

No. 53.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 16.)

(No. 288.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, May 12, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Kharput respecting the condition of the Armenians at Aivos.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 53.

Vice-Consul Fontana to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 10.) *Kharput, April 25, 1898.*
Sir,

I HAVE the honour to submit to your Excellency the following information with regard to the condition of the Christians at Aivos, a village situated upon the bank of the Euphrates at a distance of about ten hours from Kharput:—

Aivos comprises some 200 houses, viz., 90 Armenian, 60 Syrian, and 50 Turkish. It is one of the principal of the eighteen villages comprising the Abu Tahir Nahié, into which the Aloshlu Nahié, containing twenty villages, has now been merged under the Mudir Eumer Effendi, who resides at Haidusha—nearly four hours from Aivos. The greater part of the arable land, vineyards, and woodlands around Aivos belong to the Armenians, who, however, seem at present unable to profit thereby in consequence of the enmity of the local Turks who molest non-Moslems discovered working in the fields; cut down and carry off the trees and despoil the orchards of the Christians; throw stones at, and insult the Christian women water-carriers, and do their best, in short, to terrorize the Armenians and force them to abandon the village and allow their land to lapse into Moslem possession.

The Kurds of the surrounding villages do not, it appears, molest the Armenians of Aivos, whose complaints are confined to the behaviour of their Turkish fellow-villagers incited to aggression by three or four of the local Agas, of whom the more noteworthy are Bekash Aga, Mudo Mustafa Oglou Harosh, and the sons of Anosh Oglou Mehmet. The Mudir, Eumer Effendi, is very satisfactory, but the fact of his not residing at Aivos militates against his exercising much authority over the unruly characters there. A short time ago the Armenian village church was fired in the night, and a part of it was burned down. Six Turks were afterwards arrested by the Mudir and shut up in his house at Haidusha, but since then the Armenians have been treated, it seems, even worse than before; and yesterday some forty or fifty of them fled, in fear, from Aivos to Mezreh. Certain of the fugitives called upon me, informed me of the state of affairs in their village, and begged for my assistance, saying that life there was, under the present circumstances, unbearable.

I lost no time in laying before the Vali the facts reported in this despatch, and urged him to take immediate action in the matter. Raouf Bey wrote down the names -hereabove specified -of the leading Agas who, I pointed out to him, were mainly responsible for the lawlessness of the Aivos Turks; he promised to summon those men to Mezreh and to hold them answerable for the tranquillity of Aivos, and to instruct the Mudir to visit that village more frequently and attend to the villagers' complaints. In reply to my suggestion that the Mudir should be instructed to take up his residence permanently at Aivos, the Vali stated that the "merkez" or centre of the nahié was elsewhere—which is very true—and that Eumer Effendi could not be called upon to reside in any but the central village.

I regret that I was unable to suggest any more effectual measure for insuring the tranquillity and non-molestation of the Aivos Armenians. Should their condition fail to improve I propose again reporting to your Excellency in the hope that the Vali may be instructed, through the Porte, to remove from among them one or two of the most obnoxious Agas as a salutary warning to the remainder. Both personal observation and hearsay combine to convince me that the condition of the Armenians in villages of mixed inhabitants depends very largely upon the character of the leading Agas residing therein, whose authority over the peasantry of their own creed may be termed patriarchal, and so almost paramount whether for evil or for good.

I have, &c.
(Signed) RAPHAEL A. FONTANA.

No. 54.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 16.)

(No. 103.)
(Telegraphic.) P. *Constantinople, May 16, 1898, 1·5 P.M.*

I HAVE continued to make representations about the Armenian girl Annik, whose case formed the subject of my despatch No. 76 of the 7th February last, and I have just been informed, through the Sultan's First Secretary, that she has been pardoned by His Majesty.

No. 55.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 23.)

(No. 292.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, May 17, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Sivas, respecting the murder of some Armenian traders near that place.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 55.

Captain Maunsell to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 35.)
Sir, *Sivas, May 8, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to report that during the past week there have been four Armenians murdered in this province.

It is the season now for Armenian pedlars to go round the various villages and dispose of their goods.

In the village of Maksudlu, close to Clarkishla, the chief place of the Caza, two men were murdered in the daytime, quite a short distance from the village, which is a Moslem one, and where they had been doing some business.

On the 3rd May, an Armenian was found dead by the roadside near Kochhissar, a short distance north of Sivas. An Armenian doctor here was under the impression that he had been strangled, but on a Moslem doctor saying he died a natural death he was buried without further inquiry.

On the 6th May another Armenian was killed also close to Kochhissar. Of this case I have not yet been able to learn all the details.

The Armenian traders are a good deal disturbed by these murders, and are afraid to venture on their usual rounds to the villages.

I have urged on the Vali the necessity of strong action to restore confidence. He told me these were isolated acts of brigandage, which it is impossible entirely to prevent, and this may possibly be the case, but I told him I did not think so. He promised to act strongly, and do all that is necessary, but I have no great confidence in his promises, as his action is usually weak and vacillating.

Two men have been imprisoned for the murders of Maksudlu, but the Vali feigned complete ignorance of the second murder near Kochhissar, although a doctor was sent thither from Sivas. He promised to commence inquiries at once.

I have, &c.
(Signed) F. R. MAUNSELL.

No. 56.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 23.)

(No. 295.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, May 18, 1898.*

WITH reference to my despatch No. 266 of the 28th ultimo, I have the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis, reporting the removal of the Ahi Bey of Bitlis, owing to a disagreement between him and the Vali on the subject of the non-payment of the arrears of salary due to the gendarmerie.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 56.

Vice-Consul Monahan to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 6.)
Sir, *Bitlis, April 27, 1898.*

WITH reference to my telegram No. 34, I have the honour to report that the Chief of the Bitlis gendarmerie (Ahi Bey), having quarelled with the Vali about the unusually large arrears of pay due to his men, was, three weeks ago, at the instance of the Vali, who told me that he had been insolent, removed or suspended from his post, and recalled to Constantinople. I hear, however, that an order was received stopping him at Erzeroum, and that his case is to be investigated there.

I hear that from thirty to forty months' pay is due to the gendarmes of Bitlis Sandjak, and that the Christian gendarmes in Mush Sandjak wish to resign, having received pay for only a month or two since they were enrolled.

I have, &c.
(Signed) J. H. MONAHAN.

No. 57

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 23.)

(No. 296.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, May 18, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul-General at Beirout, containing a Memorandum by Mr. Crow, Vice-Consul at that place, on the subject of the journey recently made by him thither from Bitlis.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure 1 in No. 57.

Consul-General Drummond-Hay to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 30.)
Sir, *Beirout, May 5, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to transmit herewith, inclosed to your Excellency, a Memorandum which has been handed to me by Mr. Crow, containing observations on his recent journey from Bitlis to Beirout.

I have, &c.
(Signed) R. DRUMMOND-HAY.

Inclosure 2 in No. 57.

Memorandum by Vice-Consul Crow respecting his Journey from Bitlis to Beirout.

THE distance overland from Bitlis to Beirout is about 1,020 kilom., or 630 miles. The road traverses the Vilayets of Bitlis, Diarbekir, Aleppo, and part of the Damascus Vilayet, and, joining the Orontes Valley at Hamn, proceeds through the Bekaa and across the Lebanon to the sea.

Bitlis Valley.—I left Bitlis on the 26th February. The snow, though deep on the mountains, was not sufficiently heavy to impede progress by the road. The Bitlis Valley road is in course of construction. It was commenced by Tahsin Pasha, former Governor of Bitlis, some years ago, and has an average breadth of 20 feet, but is only metalled to a distance of 4 or 5 miles out of the town. The strategical importance of the Bitlis Valley position is well known. It forms the only military approach through the Eastern Taurus to Mesopotamia, and is supposed to have been the route taken by the Greeks under Xenophon in their retreat to the north.

The road is projected, and has been surveyed as far as Diarbekir, but financial embarrassment has so far been a barrier to its completion. In its present condition

it is not of much use for modern military operations, and in winter is often blocked with snow.

Dokhan, 18 miles.—The unmetalled road extends imperfectly to Dokhan, about 18 miles south of Bitlis. A few miles have been made near Ziaret, and it is distinguishable again from Farkin to Diarbekir, but for the greater portion of the distance, 159 miles, it is merely a track, fairly good in dry weather, but frequently impassable in winter, owing to mud and snow.

The present Vali of Bitlis, Eumer Bey, made considerable progress last year in cutting and in constructing bridges, and the work was continued till November. But the most difficult parts of the road still remain untouched, and for several miles near Dokhan, at the junction where the Sairt and Ziaret roads bifurcate, it is still impassable, for military purposes, for anything except the lightest mule batteries.

The Bitlis Valley, from the entrance to it on the north from the Rahwar, the high table-land leading from the Mush Plain to the Van Lake to Dokhan, a distance of some 30 miles, is one of the most picturesque spots I have seen in Eastern Anatolia from Erzeroum to Aleppo. The narrow gorge is hemmed in on both sides with lofty mountain ranges, their serrated peaks towering one above the other, covered with snow in winter, and at other times of the year green with dwarf oak, fir, and evergreen.

At Dokhan the road crosses the Bitlis Su, which, is one of the higher affluents of the Tigris, to its western bank, and, leaving the valley proper, passes through more open country skirting the Modeki Mountains east of Sasun.

The winter has made great havoc in the road-work of last year, and in many places we were obliged to deviate, where the embankment had given way, or where the accumulation of snow rendered the ordinary track impassable. The valley has become notoriously unsafe since the Modeki disturbances of last year, which culminated in the death of nineteen Government officials and the destruction of the Government offices of the Caza.

The hesitation of the Central Government to bring military pressure to bear on the Modekanlis, through fear of causing an outbreak among the Kurds of that and the coterminous districts, has aggravated the insecurity by leaving the offenders unpunished. At Dokhan, where I saw brigands plundering a Kurdish caravan on the high road in November, when my zaptieh fired ten shots at one of the desperadoes in the valley without hitting him, we crossed the stream by a good stone bridge, and climbed the western slope to the Ziaret road.

The high mountains of Sasun in the background are capped with snow, and the river winds through the lower ranges near the road. Villages are dotted here and there on rocky eminences protruding over the water. There is much pasture and cultivation, and several fine Arab bridges, now crumbling into decay, cross the lower reaches of the Bitlis Su. The population, which is scanty, is entirely Kurdish.

Ziaret, 25 miles.—At Ziaret, about 25 miles from Dokhan, I was entertained by Sheikh Seyyid Mehmed at the Tehien-waisa-el-Kirani, a follower of Mahommed, who flourished about the time of the Hejira, is buried here, and his tomb, which is immensely venerated, is visited yearly by large numbers of pilgrims from all parts of Asia Minor. Considerable sums have been spent on Tehieu, and travellers of every denomination are hospitably received.

The Sheikh in charge, Seyyid Mehmed, is about 50, a native of Saird, and a man of much influence in those parts. His brother was recently employed by the Government on a pacificatory mission to Mustafa Pasha, of Jezireh, with a view to effect an official reconciliation between the latter and his neighbours.

The authorities of Diarbekir, when I passed through, were engaged in endeavouring to settle their differences, which have for long disturbed the tranquillity of that district and hampered the Government.

Sheikh Mehmed spoke much of the mineral wealth in the neighbourhood of Ziaret, but no attempt has been made to exploit it. The salt mines here, controlled by the Public Debt Administration, are, however, extensive, and give good returns.

In speaking of the general insecurity, he said it was entirely owing to the mistaken views of the Government and the way they administered the country. He said, if the Government would authorize him to deal with the Kurds in the mountains round, justly and equitably, he would make himself personally responsible for the safety of the road from Diarbekir to Bitlis, and they could hang him at his own gate if a single caravan was plundered while the responsibility rested on his shoulders.

His account of the treatment of the Kurds in Modeki and of his reasons why they rebelled against Government orders and murdered the Kaimakam, the head of the gendarmerie, and others, entirely confirmed the statement previously made to me by

Dervish Bey, of Bitlis, who, at the request of the Vali, endeavoured to administer that Caza for three months during the summer of 1897, but gave it up as a hopeless task, as he could not execute the orders he received. Both the Sheikh and Dervish Bey said the Government tried to collect twice the amount of sheep tax to which they were entitled, and, when poor men owed taxes and ran away because they could not pay, the sums due were demanded from the more prosperous villagers, who had paid their share and owed nothing.

The Sheikh of Ziaret, who is well acquainted with the leading Kurds of Modeki, and is universally respected, might be made a useful instrument for pacifying that district, if the intentions of the Government were sound.

The Kurdish peasantry, though wild and ignorant, are keenly sensible to injustice, and fully appreciate the evils arising from a corrupt administration. With the hatred which their laxity, indifference, and bad government has created against them in the minds both of Kurd and Armenian, the position of the Turks in Eastern Anatolia would, if there were any unanimous feeling among the inhabitants, be a very critical one. The country is conquered, and nothing more. No serious attempt has been made at political organization. Promises of reform only have not been spared, and one Tanzimat has succeeded, and that without producing any effect on the system of administration or ameliorating the condition of the inhabitants.

With a few exceptions, principally among the Valis and some of the more prominent officials, the employés are, by the very nature of their appointments, corrupt and inefficient. Some regard their tenure of office as an opportunity for making money which may never recur, while others, banished from Constantinople for political purposes, or because of their too enlightened sympathies, look upon their position as an exile, and, taking no interest in the country they are sent to govern, pass their time in fruitless endeavours to return to the capital or vent their spleen on the luckless peasantry subject to their jurisdiction. Few, if any, have the necessary qualities or education to perform their duties properly.

Under these circumstances, and with these ideas, they find it easier to go with the current than against it, and more simple to side with the strong against the weak, and with the rich against the poor, than to attempt to check or remedy the injustice which such tendencies must of necessity produce.

I have every reason to believe the present Vali of Bitlis, Eumer Bey, to be uncorrupt, a hard worker, and well disposed to reform. His enemies attest his integrity and perseverance. But his predecessors, since the subjugation of the independent Beys of Bitlis in 1836, had, with the exception of Raouf Pasha, no such qualities. For the most part, they joined hands with the leading wealthy Kurds, oppressed the population, Kurd and Christian, and made money. A succession of administrators of this category has enormously increased the difficulty of governing the country.

To use use a definition given me by the Vali the day before I left Bitlis, the Kurds, who as a body compose the essence of the difficulty with which the Government has to cope, are divided into three distinct classes:—

(*a.*) Zalim and Ghairi Muti, or oppressors and unsubmissive.
(*b.*) Zalim and Muti, or oppressors and submissive.
(*c.*) Mazlum and Muti, or oppressed and submissive.

The present attitude of the Central Government towards Governors and governed in the Provinces of Eastern Anatolia, is not, I think, as viewed from within, adapted to bring about an equitable adjustment of the differences which divide these three classes, or to restore the balance between them which has been displaced. And until this is done, I do not anticipate any security for life and property or any efficient administration of those provinces which I have visited.

Zok, 20 miles.—Zok, the centre of the Government of Ghuzan, is the last Kaimakamlik to the south under Bitlis, and lies on the borders of the Vilayet of Diarbekir. It is about 20 miles from Ziaret. I found Muri Bey, whose acquaintance I made at Saird in November, while acting Mutessarif there, in charge. He was removed from Constantinople for political reasons some fifteen years ago, and has since occupied various posts in the Vilayet of Bitlis. He is now an elderly man, with small hopes of advancement. He rendered much assistance at Sairt in the trial of the murderers of Yusuf Yunau, and exerted his influence with the Cadi and others to further the ends of justice. From Zok to Farkin the road crosses several small affluents of the Batman Su flowing from Sasun. I saw no Christian villages on my route, and the country is for the most part wild and desolate with a few Kurdish settlements scattered among the hills. The regular road passes further north and leads to a good bridge across the Batman Su, which is a large river at this point. As the snow in the mountains had not yet melted and the

water was low, we crossed from the high road and forded the stream near Sakhté, which, with other Kurdish villages, lies between the Batman Su and Farkin.

Farkin, 35 miles.—Farkin, about 35 miles from Zok, is a large town at the base of one of the lower spurs of the Taurus and is a military depot. It has extensive fortifications, now in ruins, and is surrounded by a Roman wall and towers with curiously [illegible] enclosed stocks, standing still in their places. The masonry. There are numerous Cufic [illegible] supply, and the country round is well cultivated. The mountains to the west of the fortifications, but nearly [illegible] houses, and [illegible] the Battle-ground.

[illegible] about 36 miles [illegible] Plain of Arzan. [illegible] Khan. It [illegible] of undulating [illegible] Opposite [illegible] passed [illegible] Zeugmatis [illegible] cultivated [illegible] Arzan [illegible] Khan is Kurdish. The inhabitants of the Zaza [illegible] Kurdish and [illegible] Mush. The [illegible] Patriarch Kenos [illegible] Dahir [illegible] the [illegible] Mush, [illegible] Bitlis.

Bitlis, 25 miles.—[illegible] Bitlis is one of the [illegible] and [illegible] Bitlis [illegible] Mush [illegible] Bitlis [illegible] Zaza [illegible] Kurdish

them 70 feet in diameter, which draw up water from the Orontes and distribute it in aqueducts through the town for domestic purposes and for irrigation. The Orontes is crossed by a good stone bridge which divides the modern from the old town. From Hama to Homs, 30 miles, there is an excellent carriage road metalled, and about 22 feet wide. There is a daily diligence service to and fro (an Ottoman Company) which covers the distance in five hours. The road crosses the Orontes half-way between Hama and Homs by a good stone bridge of twelve arches at the village of Rastem. We passed many caravans on the road from Damascus to Hama carrying skins, petroleum, hemp, sugar, and oranges.

Homs, 30 miles.—Homs is a straggling town with a population of 30,000, including many Greek Christians, Melchites, and Moslems. The country round is fertile, but the plains are covered with the wild hyacinth, which seriously interferes with cultivation. There is a carriage road from here to Damascus. Caravans take thirty hours. There is no diligence service. There is, however, a daily service between Homs and Tripoli, 18 hours.

From Homs I followed the eastern bank of the Orontes, which rises near the village of Hermil, not far from this point, on the slopes of the Lebanon. The river passes through the Homs Lake on its course northwards.

Baalbec, 66 miles.—From Homs I crossed into the Bekaa at Baalbec by way of Kuseir and Rass, a distance of 66 miles, and thence proceeded through the Baalbec plains and reached Beirout by the old French road over the Lebanon. Baalbec to Beirout by the road is about 55 miles. We joined the railway at Mualaca.

I took the opportunity while at Stoura of visiting the wine factory, vaults, and distillery of Selim Boulad, a wealthy Arab proprietor who owns a property at Stoura of 200 acres, of which 50 acres are planted with vine and the remainder reserved for the production of cereals and for sericulture.

The value of the estate including plant, machinery, and wine in stock, is roughly estimated by him at 30,000*l.* The cultivation of the vines, which are largely imported from France, and the manufacture and storage of the wine, are entirely conducted on European lines. The vaults are extensive and contain in stock 30,000 litres (66,066 gallons) of wine in the wood up to ten years' old, and 10,000 litres (2,222 gallons) of older wine in bottles.

M. Boulad's chief sale is in Egypt, where the Khedive deals with him largely. He has agents in New York, Paris, and Madagascar, and does a considerable trade with France. Some of the better wines are exceedingly good, the white wines comparing very favourably with the best Rhine productions.

The prices vary from 35 centimes a litre for the common Syrian table wine to 2 fr. 25 c. the bottle for the best qualities. He also manufactures cognac and raki. The quantity of wine produced yearly on the estate is approximately 200,000 litres (44,444 gallons).

Beirout, 55 miles.—I reached Beirout on the 5th April, on the 39th day after leaving Bitlis.

(Signed) FRANCIS EDWARD CROW.

Beirout, May 1, 1898.

No. 58.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(*Received May* 23.)

(No. 301.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, May* 19, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis respecting the alleged deterioration in the economic condition of that vilayet, and requesting permission to visit various portions of it with a view to ascertaining the truth of the reports which have reached him on the subject.

Mr. Monahan has already requested permission to visit the Cazas of Shirvan and Ahlat, and I have authorized him to undertake these journeys if he can do so with safety.

I have, &c.

(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 58.

Vice-Consul Monahan to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 7.)

Sir, *Bitlis, April* 30, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to submit the following observations relating chiefly to the economic condition of the people of this vilayet. I propose to include in my commercial Report some of the information here given.

The population of the vilayet, outside the three small towns Bitlis, Mush, and Sairt, may, so far as I can understand, be classified as follows:—

First, there are the Christian villagers and the peaceful settled Kurdish villagers who do not belong to any strong Kurdish tribe. This class cultivates the soil, and the Government depends on it for by far the greater part of the taxes. I will refer to it as the class of "peaceful villagers."

Secondly, there are the settled but not peaceful Kurdish villagers, who belong to strong tribes, and whose leaders, comparatively wealthy Kurds, live in big houses in or near villages and oppress Christian villagers. From this class have been formed all the Hamidieh regiments in this vilayet, namely, those in the Cazas of Boulanik, Varto, and Malasguird, in the Mush Sandjak—cazas, it may be noted, which are naturally suited for cavalry evolutions, and are near the Russian frontier. Many of the wealthy Kurds mentioned hold commissions as officers of Hamidiehs. Speaking generally, the Kurds of this second class, whether enrolled as Hamidiehs or not, seem to pay nothing but sheep tax, and that irregularly, and to cultivate the soil very little, if ever.

Thirdly, there are the nomad and semi-nomad Kurds, from whom the Government gets nothing beyond a very little occasional sheep tax.

The first class gets most of its money by the sale of grain, or from villagers who are earning wages outside the Turkish Asiatic provinces.

The second and third classes get money chiefly from the sale of sheep and cattle. The latter two classes, owing to unchecked robbery and general non-payment of taxes, are in comfortable circumstances as compared with the first class.

A person who should be well informed gives me the following details, which I believe to be accurate:—

Ten years ago there was four times as much land under cultivation as there is now, and arrears of taxes were inconsiderable. Every village of the vilayet now owes large arrears of taxes, and the peaceful villagers are engaged in a continual controversy with the tax-collectors. The peaceful villagers, though the crops have not failed since 1892, have often insufficient food, and hardly ever have any food but bread and milk.

Among Christian villagers drunkenness is unknown, and, indeed, alcoholic drink is not taken more than about once a-year.

A villager has very little surplus grain to sell, and the gode (12 okes) of wheat, which before 1892 fetched 2½ to 3 piastres in the Bitlis market, has never fallen below 6 piastres since that year, and is now at 10 piastres.

The great cause of the land being thrown out of cultivation is the constant robbery of oxen.

Before 1892 villagers sold their surplus grain to Bitlis merchants, who stored much of it for the time of scarcity, which, curiously enough, seems to come about once in seven years. There is now no grain stored in Bitlis town, and, owing to the poverty of villagers, business is in a very dull state in the bazaar.

The condition of things, as represented by my informant, is evidently serious and dangerous, and I would respectfully suggest that I should visit various parts of the vilayet, not for the purpose of summarizing cases of crime and oppression, but for that of ascertaining whether there is really so much danger of the disappearance of the peaceful villagers, and of the collapse of the Turkish Government.

I have, &c.

(Signed) J. H. MONAHAN.

No. 59.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 23.)

(No. 302.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, May 19, 1898.*

ON receipt of the despatch from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Bitlis, transmitted to your Lordship in my despatch No. 244 of the 19th ultimo, respecting the murder of the Chief of Police at that place, and the hostility towards the Armenian inhabitants aroused by the occurrence, I have the honour to report that I at once instructed Mr. Block, First Dragoman to Her Majesty's Embassy, to communicate to the Grand Vizier the details of the affair, and to urge on his Highness the necessity of taking steps to prevent a massacre of Armenians at Bitlis, which appears not unlikely, in view of the feeling now prevalent there.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

No. 60.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 23.)

(No. 303.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, May 19, 1898.*

I LEARN, confidentially, that a project is now before the Ministry of Public Works for a railway from Koniah to Bagdad, viâ Oulu, Kichla, Alexandretta, Aleppo, and Bussah.

The Company—said to be a German-Belgian combination, but of uncertain composition—is represented here by a M. Cotard. It asks for no kilometric guarantee, but only for the right to construct ports at Alexandretta, at Busrah, and at Bagdad, and perhaps at other places on the Tigris or Euphrates. The plan has been approved by the Ministry of Public Works, and will be submitted to the Council of Ministers, and though nothing definite has as yet been decided upon, I hear that the Sultan is in favour of the scheme.

No objection is being raised by the German Anatolian Railway Company, who, it would appear, are abandoning their old idea of extending to the east and south, and intend to work round to the sea at Alexandretta.

This new scheme obviously conflicts with the interests of the French Company, which has obtained a Concession for a line from Damascus through Aleppo to Birejik, and the French Embassy are said to be pressing for the extension of the Adana-Tarsus-Mersina line to Marash.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

No. 61.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 23.)

(No. 304.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, May 19, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to inform your Lordship that several arrests of Armenians have taken place lately in the Vilayet of Bitlis.

Mr. Monahan, telegraphing on the 15th instant, reported that twenty-eight Armenian villagers had been arrested for harbouring revolutionists, and that nine Armenians and one Mussulman, all prominent merchants, were imprisoned for complicity in the murder of the Bitlis Police Commissary.

This made a total of eighty-six Armenian political prisoners confined at Bitlis untried, including twenty-nine accused of murder.

I have instructed Mr. Block to point out to the Sublime Porte that the prisons were again becoming crowded, as in former years, with prisoners awaiting their trial, and to urge that the prisoners in question should be brought to trial without further delay.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

No. 62.

The Marquess of Salisbury to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 117.)
Sir, *Foreign Office, May 26, 1898.*

I HAVE received your Excellency's despatch No. 225 of the 9th ultimo relative to the murder of Yusuf Yunan, and I approve the terms of the *pro-memorid* which you caused to be presented to the Grand Vizier, demanding payment by the Turkish Government of the amount stolen from the murdered man.

I am, &c.
(Signed) SALISBURY.

No. 63.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 30.)

(No. 306.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, May 20, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul at Jerusalem respecting the murder of a Mussulman by an Armenian at Bethlehem.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 63.

Consul Dickson to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 21.)
Sir, *Jerusalem, May 7, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to report to your Excellency that on Sunday last, the 1st instant, an Armenian of somewhat good position in the town of Bethlehem, and named Saleh Nassar, murdered a Mussulman during a night brawl.

It appears that the Armenian and Mussulman, who were friends, had agreed to take a stroll in the evening, but as it happened to be the first night of the festival of the Courban Bairam, the Mussulman was somewhat the worse for liquor, and shortly afterwards a dispute arose between them which ended in a fight with knives. The Mussulman received a wound in his side, and died almost immediately; but the Armenian maintains that in the scuffle he accidentally killed himself. The Armenian and another man who was seen with him at the time have been arrested, and are now in prison in Jerusalem awaiting their trial.

The incident created some excitement and alarm amongst the Armenians and Christians generally in Bethlehem, as it was feared that the Mahommedans would retaliate upon them, but the prompt arrest of the offender by the authorities, and the fact that he was an Armenian Catholic and not a Gregorian Armenian, seems to have pacified the Mussulman population, and fortunately no disturbance occurred.

I have, &c.
(Signed) JOHN DICKSON.

No. 64.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 30.)

(No. 313.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, May 25, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul at Damascus, reporting the general failure of the crops in his district.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 64.

Consul Richards to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 25.)
Sir, *Damascus, May* 13, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to inform your Excellency that a remarkably light spring rainfall, following on one of the coldest and dryest winters that has ever been experienced in this country, is beginning to cause the gravest apprehensions as to the probability, indeed, I may say, the all-but-certainty, of a very considerable failure in the crops—grain especially being most seriously threatened. Throughout the Hauran, which is the granary of Syria and Palestine, the harvest prospects are very gloomy—a loss of crops amounting to nearly 60 per cent. being anticipated. The reports from other parts of the country, such as the Zahleh, Bekáa, Ba-al-Bek, and Jebel Kalmoun districts, are almost, if not quite, as discouraging, so that the general agricultural outlook is decidedly cheerless. The Jebel Druse district may, perhaps, be cited as the solitary exception, its soil being of so light and shallow a description that a very moderate rainfall is all that it requires.

We are already suffering from the natural and inevitable outcome of an anticipated failure in the grain crops, viz., a very considerable rise in the price of wheat and barley, both of which are selling at double their ordinary prices.

In addition to, and even more than, the loss in grain, the country has undergone a loss in sheep and goats which is almost unprecedented.

In the Zahleh and Ba-al-Bek districts I am informed on good authority that it would be no exaggeration to say that 75 per cent. of the flocks have, owing to one cause or another, perished. In the Merj district the loss may be estimated at 50 per cent., while in that of the Hauran, on the other hand, it does not exceed 20 per cent.

Taking the vilayet as a whole, the loss in sheep and goats may be put at one-half. The natural consequence is that the price of mutton (beef is unknown in this province) is exactly double what should be at this time of the year. The causes of death have been the unprecedentedly long and severe winter (tens of thousands of animals having been killed by the cold), drought in the spring, and consequently lack of pasture, and disease, which exposure and want invariably bring in their train.

As regards the fruit crop on which the prosperity of so many of the inhabitants of the Damascus district depends, the prospects are anything but brilliant; the orange and lemon crops having entirely failed, while the fig trees have suffered to an almost equal extent.

A loss of 30 per cent. in the olive crops is anticipated, and the appearance of vines and apricot trees is the reverse of encouraging. Here again it is the very severe cold followed by months of dry weather that has done the damage which no amount of rain now could wholly repair, though such a contingency as a really heavy downpour is in the last degree improbable.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. S. RICHARDS.

No. 65.

Sir P. Currie to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received May 30.)

(No. 314.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, May* 25, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul-General at Bagdad, giving information respecting events in the Vilayet of Mosul.

I have, &c.
(Signed) PHILIP CURRIE.

Inclosure in No. 65.

Consul-General Loch to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 27.)
Sir, *Bagdad, April* 30, 1898.

I HAVE the honour respectfully to place below, for your Excellency's information, following extracts from a newsletter, dated the 20th instant, from Mr. Consular Agent Fassam at Mosul:—

"Last week his Excellency Abdul Wahab Pasha, our Wali, received a Vizierial letter from Constantinople ordering him to remit to Constantinople the sum of 10,000 Turkish liras from this vilayet. His Excellency twice excused compliance to remit such an amount, representing the great straits the Treasury was suffering; but instead of being given ear to, he was reordered under Imperial command to remit 15,000 Turkish liras from this vilayet within fifteen days, and that it was very much required for transmission to the troops now at Thessaly. Against this order the Wali found no alternative but to impose 6,000 liras on Mosul and its districts, 6,000 liras on Kerkook and its dependencies, and 3,000 liras on the minor Province of Sulemanieh. The collection of this amount drove matters relating to recovery of outstanding revenues to extremities, for the Wali sent for all who were indebted and imprisoned some of them, seized properties and sheep of others, and sold them by auction; so much so that his Excellency committed to prison Mirza Pasha, the Amir of the Shekhan, for he owed arrears of taxes about 12,000 G. S. piastres; this the Amir tried to the utmost to make him to accept his accumulated pay, and the pays of his brothers, Hamzah Pasha and Baddee Pasha, due to them from the Treasury, in liquidation of their liabilities; he not only took no notice of the proposal, but, on the contrary, there arrived an order from Constantinople enjoining that those pays should cease from the date of a Report which was submitted by his Excellency Zehdi Pasha, the late Wali, for he had therewith informed the Porte that these Pashas had no more right to enjoy allowances, for they had renounced Islamism, and were firm in their own religion of Yezidis; and when Mirza Pasha was called in and asked what religion he pursued, he declared that of the Yezidis, for he was a Yezidi, and son of Yezidi, and that the Islamism accepted by him in the time of Omar Pasha was forcible. Upon this declaration his Excellency ordered him to be imprisoned, and caused his sheep and horses to be brought into town, and from yesterday they have commenced selling them by auction. His Excellency, moreover, sequestered his landed properties, and has decided to dispose of them by auction to pay his debt. The order from Constantinople concerning his pay and those of his brothers is to the effect that they are to be paid if they are firm in their Islamism with all their hearts and confession, otherwise they are not to be paid. As to their other brother, Ali Pasha, who was exiled to Sivaz and was afterwards pardoned, he has not yet returned to this country, and I am told his allowance is increased to 25 liras for declaring Islamism before the Administrative Council of Sivaz.

"His Beatitude Mar Abd Yeshoo Khayat, the Chaldean Patriarch, leaves Mosul to-day by raft for Bagdad, having at last obtained the Imperial permission to proceed thither which was refused him for the last two years."

2. His Beatitude arrived at Bagdad on the 24th instant.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. LOCH.

No. 66.

Mr. de Bunsen to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received June 6.)

(No. 325.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, May* 31, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to transmit to your Lordship copy of a further despatch from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Sivas, respecting the abduction and forced conversion to Islamism of Armenian girls in his district.

Detailed information, founded upon Captain Maunsell's reports, has not ceased to be given to the Sublime Porte with regard to this subject, and I learn from Mr. Block that the Foreign Minister has been induced by these representations to press the

matter upon the attention of the Grand Vizier, and that the Minister of the Interior has now sent the Vali of Sivas instructions which he promises will lead his Excellency to adopt a more impartial attitude.

I have requested Captain Maunsell by telegraph to see the Vali again when these instructions, which were posted on the 26th instant, have been received.

I have, &c.
(Signed) M. DE BUNSEN

Inclosure in No. 66.

Captain Maunsell to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 36.)
Sir, *Sivas, May 22, 1898.*

IN continuation of my despatch No. 34, I have the honour to inform you that the Court for the trial of the abductors of the Armenian girl from Yarhissar has had another sitting.

The original report of the Kaimakam of Hafik, said to have been lost, was now read in open Court, and showed clearly that he acted energetically in the matter and imprisoned the abductors.

Several Armenian and other witnesses came forward and gave their evidence very clearly, and there remains no doubt whatever of the forcible abduction of the girl.

The girl finally took refuge in her house, the door was battered in, and she was abducted in broad daylight.

Once abducted, the girl's forcible conversion to Mahommedanism followed as a matter of course.

The numerous stories put forward by the Vali that the girl did not like her husband, voluntarily left him, and so forth, were clearly disproved in open Court.

Further sittings of the Court will be held.

The Dragoman of the French Consulate and mine both attended the Court.

This girl's husband, Artin Karakezian, has now been sent away from the Vali's house, as it was found when he was allowed out (followed by zaptiehs) that he went to church.

He came to me for advice, and I sent him first to a Christian house, and now propose sending him to his father's house at Yarhissar, which is but a short distance from Sivas.

His wife is still kept shut up in the house of Nourri Effendi, as I have already informed your Excellency.

Although closely watched, she has managed to send a message praying to be allowed to return to her husband and Christianity.

As regards the girl abducted from Chepni, who was shut up here in the house of Hadjaro Effendi, she was removed the other night from here under guard of three zaptiehs and sent to another Moslem house at Charkishla, twelve hours' distant. It is said that she attempted to escape.

I have, &c.
(Signed) F. R. MAUNSELL.

No. 67.

Sir N. O'Conor to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received June 6.)

(No. 224.)
My Lord, *St. Petersburgh, June 2, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to transmit herewith to your Lordship a précis of an article from the "Novoe Vremya" on the construction of railways by German Companies in Asia Minor.

This article, which has been preceded by others on the same subject, seems to have been provoked by statements in the German press to the effect that this enterprise is in no way associated with politics, or could affect Russian interests in that part of the world. This is not by any means the view of the "Novoe Vremya," nor can Russians regard favourably and without much concern the extension of railways in Asia Minor under the auspices of Germany.

I have, &c.
(Signed) N. R. O'CONOR.

Inclosure in No. 67.

Précis of Article in the "Novoe Vremya."

THE "Novoe Vremya," with reference to the report that the first section of the projected through-line between Constantinople and Bagdad is to be that between Angora and Cesarea, says:—

If we compare the utterances of the Constantinople Trade Journal with those of the "Hamburg Correspondenz," we can gather from these papers the information that the German Anatolian Railway Company will next draw Alexandretta within its net in order to further extend the line to Bagdad. That is the explanation of all the discussion that has been going on about Alexandretta. Apparently it was not without reason, at any rate, that portion of it which referred to the railway to the Persian Gulf.

The declaration of the Hamburg newspaper that the Anatolian railways have nothing to do with politics and are purely a private enterprise, requires, all the same, some explanation.

We have never said, and do not say to-day, that the Anatolian railways belong to the German Government. We do declare, however, that these railways belong to a German Company, and will eventually, owing to the extraordinary persistence of German diplomats, play a certain part in politics. This seems incontestable, and will no doubt be confirmed by the circumstances and conditions of the Concessions.

The Hamburg newspaper only admits of one circumstance which might cause uneasiness in St. Petersburgh, viz: "If a large Company should be formed under the protection of the German Government, whose object it would be to people Anatolia to a great extent with German colonists."

But we will point out to this paper another reason which would cause Russian policy to follow with attention German plans in Asia Minor, namely, that these plans would be carried out at Russia's cost. It cannot be a matter of indifference to us if Germany or any other country constructs in spite of us railways from the centre of Anatolia to our frontiers. Everything that goes on in Asia Minor is of the liveliest interest for us, and no persuasion of Hamburg financiers will succeed in convincing us that Asia Minor is of no more importance to Russia than the valley of the Zambezi.

If Turkey were to construct these railways at her own expense, Russia would have no cause for complaint, as they would be doubtless necessary to meet the growing requirements of that territory. If Germany, however, provides Turkey with these lines, if German industry undertakes the construction as a business with offers of capital and material, evolving plans for assuming the lead, while at the same time she grumbles and lets off fireworks on the Bosphorus, it would be absurd to expect that Russia should shut her eyes to what is going on in her immediate neighbourhood.

No. 68.

The Marquess of Salisbury to Mr. de Bunsen.

(No. 130.)
Sir, *Foreign Office, June 9, 1898.*

I HAVE received Sir P. Currie's despatch No. 296 of the 18th ultimo, inclosing a Memorandum by Mr. Vice-Consul Crow on a journey recently made by him from Bitlis to Beirout.

I request that you will convey my thanks to Mr. Crow for this interesting Report.

I am, &c.
(Signed) SALISBURY.

No. 69.

The Marquess of Salisbury to Mr. de Bunsen.

(No. 131.)
Sir, *Foreign Office, June 9, 1898.*

I HAVE received Sir P. Currie's despatch No. 302 of the 19th ultimo, reporting that he had instructed Mr. Block to communicate to the Grand Vizier the details of the murder of the Chief of Police at Bitlis, which have been received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul, and to urge on His Highness the necessity of taking steps to prevent a massacre of Armenians at that place.

Sir P. Currie's action in this matter is approved by Her Majesty's Government.

I am, &c.
(Signed) SALISBURY.

No. 70.

The Marquess of Salisbury to Mr. de Bunsen.

(No. 133.)
Sir, *Foreign Office, June 9, 1898.*

I HAVE received Sir P. Currie's despatch No. 282 of the 10th ultimo, forwarding an account received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Sivas of the abduction of certain Armenian girls in that vilayet, and reporting the steps taken by his Excellency to obtain an investigation of these cases by the Sublime Porte.

I approve Sir P. Currie's action in this matter.

I am, &c.
(Signed) SALISBURY

No. 71.

Consul-General Drummond Hay to Sir P. Currie.—(Received at Foreign Office, June 13.)

(No. 36.)
Sir, *Beirout, May 31, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to report that the Government of the Lebanon has been transferred from Baabda to the summer quarters at Beiteddin and that, during a short vacation accorded to the Members of the Administration, Naoum Pasha intends to make a tour, visiting Mualaka-Damour on the road to Sidon and several other places in the Caimakamlik of Bjezzin. Before leaving, his Excellency expressed to me his satisfaction at the orderly and tranquil condition of the province.

I have, &c.
Signed) R. DRUMMOND HAY

No. 72.

Mr. de Bunsen to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received June 13.)

(No. 334.)
My Lord, *Therapia, June 7, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to transmit a series of despatches from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Van, giving an interesting account of the first part of his journey across the Persian frontier, and reporting generally upon the state of affairs on both sides of the border.

Although the reports of Armenian revolutionary activity on the Persian side, which led Captain Elliot to undertake the journey, appear to have been exaggerated, he found the country still suffering severely from the consequences of the Armenian raid of last summer, which led to reprisals by the Kurds, and afforded the Persian officials a pretext for oppression and extortion.

At the conclusion of his despatch No. 18 of the 5th May, Captain Elliot advocates the establishment of a British Agent at Urumiah to counteract the influence of the Russian Vice-Consulate, which he hears is shortly to be stationed there. Such an official he considers would do much to encourage British trade, and to restore some measure of justice and good government.

It will be seen from Captain Elliot's despatch No. 19 of the 7th instant, and its inclosures, that the Nestorian population in the neighbourhood of Urumiah is expecting the return of the Russian Mission which was suddenly recalled to Russia last year after enrolling some 10,000 Nestorians as members of the Orthodox Church. The proceedings of this Mission have attracted the close attention of the Ottoman Government, which fears that a renewal of the Russian propaganda will eventually absorb the Nestorian communities on the Turkish as well as those on the Persian side of the frontier.

Two of the inclosed despatches describe the severe mortality prevailing among the Turkish garrison of Van, and the methods by which arms are procured by the Armenian population.

I have, &c.
(Signed) M. DE BUNSEN.

Inclosure 1 in No. 72.

Captain Elliot to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 16.)
Sir, *Tabreez, May 2, 1898*

I HAVE the honour to report that during the past winter there has been great mortality among the Turkish troops in Van.

There were five battalions in the town, whose strength I estimated at about 250 to 300 men each.

The estimates given as to the number of deaths that occurred varied from 300 to 1,000. I was told by a man who lived near the Military Hospital that several funerals left it daily, and I noticed myself a pinched and sickly look on the faces of many of the soldiers I saw in the streets.

It is difficult to ascertain the exact numbers that died, as the authorities tried to conceal the state of affairs, but 20 per cent. would probably not be an over-estimate. At Serai I was told that the battalion there had lost many men, thirty to fifty, but that the battalion at Bashkala was better off.

The cause of these deaths was put down to "typhus." Whatever it was it was undoubtedly due to exposure to cold. The men's rations appeared to me good and sufficient, but they were badly clothed, the bedding was insufficient, and the rooms were badly warmed.

The most trying of all was the sentry duty at night. Owing to an idea held by the authorities that the revolutionists might try to cause disturbance in Van, and the unreliableness of the police, there were a large number of posts with several sentries on each, so the duty came round pretty often.

The Turkish sentry remains standing still on his foot, and, though relieved hourly,

the men used to get thoroughly chilled in the bitter winter nights, with the thermometer at many degrees below freezing.

The ordinary military great-coat is quite useless against cold of this description, and continued exposure to it under such conditions must be a severe strain on the hardest constitution.

I have, &c.
(Signed) G. S. ELLIOT.

Inclosure 2 in No. 72.

Captain Elliot to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 17.)
Sir, *Tabreez, May 2, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to submit the following report on the methods by which arms are obtained by Armenians in the Van Vilayet and elsewhere:—

I have for some time suspected that there were a good number of rifles in the possession of Armenians in Van, and on my journey to Persia I have found ample confirmation of this suspicion, and ascertained how they are procured.

It is estimated that there are at least 1,000 rifles in the possession of Armenians in Van, most of them the Berdans, formerly in use in the Russian army. There are some Martinis, mostly those used in the Turkish army, though a few may be copies of this arm, made by Armenians in Van, or the frontier of Persia, in such places as Meraglia (east of Urumiah Lake), Tabreez, Khoi, &c. There are, too, a certain number of the present Russian army magazine rifle.

There appears to be very little difficulty for any one to obtain a rifle in Van, but of course a high price has to be paid for it.

Last summer when certain squadrons of the Hamidieh were supplied with Martinis by the Turkish Government in order the better to enable them to defend the frontier against raids by Armenian revolutionists, they came in to Van and sold their Berdans to Armenians, though they were well aware that these rifles, it used at all, would be used most likely against themselves.

About the same time, as was reported to your Excellency, about 300 families of Persian Kurds came into Turkey, and remained in the neighbourhood of Ardjek and Karakunduz, about 20 miles from Van, for some months in the hopes of receiving grants of land belonging to Armenians. They returned to Persia in the autumn. While in Turkey these men sold about 100 rifles (Berdans) to Armenians, at prices varying from 6*l.* to 1*l.*

Kurds, too, buy rifles from agents in Khoi or elsewhere, take them across the Turkish frontier, and sell them at a profit to Armenians.

A few years ago rifles and ammunition used to be sold by soldiers in Van, who stole them either from comrades or the Arsenal. These thefts were, I am told, committed by Kurds in the ranks, and not by Turks. This has been stopped, or nearly so, as great vigilance is now exercised, but soldiers still sell their cartridges.

The Nestorians from Persia go in large numbers every year to Russia. Hardly a party returns without some rifles with it.

There appears to be no difficulty in buying these rifles in Russia, but their export being forbidden, as the frontier is approached, they are taken to pieces and concealed in the men's clothes. It is not believed that any of the new Russian army rifle, with magazine, are imported this way, as a heavy penalty is imposed on any one caught with one in their possession by the Russian authorities.

There are, however, a very large number of these rifles in Azarbijan. They are sold openly in the bazaars, as well as the ammunition for them. This fact is known to the Russian Consul-General in Tabreez, who discussed the matter with me. I have inspected several of these rifles lately. The numbers on the barrels, bolts, and breech pieces do not correspond, and the wood of the stock is scarfed, suggesting first, that they have been taken to pieces to bring across the frontier; and second, that several have been brought across at a time. This business is in the hands of Armenians, and, I believe, exclusively of revolutionists. It is said that they are smuggled across in bales of merchandize. Several I saw bore the date 1897, and were of the newest pattern.

M. Hippins, the Russian Vice-Consul at Rizo, who was acting at Van during the winter, and who accompanied me from Khoi to Tabreez, would not believe at first in the existence of a trade in smuggled rifles. He was, however, soon convinced, and took the numbers of all rifles with the Russian Government stamp.

A day or two after his arrival, the sale of these rifles was prohibited here; but I nevertheless, had some offered me for sale daily, but with more or less secrecy.

Large numbers of the Martini rifles with Turkish Government stamp, and the Berdans with Russian Government stamp, came into the possession of merchants and others about the time of the war.

As regards the fact that many of the Armenians in the Van Vilayet have contrived to arm themselves, I believe the sole object in most cases to be self-defence, especially where the weapons are Berdans or Martinis. As far as I have been able to ascertain, the revolutionists always contrive to supply themselves with the new Russian magazine rifle.

I am of opinion that it would be most inadvisable to institute searches for arms. The bulk of the people are disgusted with the revolutionists and their ways, and dread their visits more than those of the Kurds.

I have, &c.
(Signed) G. S. ELLIOT.

Inclosure 3 in No. 72.

Captain Elliot to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 18.)
Sir, *Tabreez, May 5, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to submit the following report of my journey in Persia up to the date of my arrival at Tabreez:—

It appears advisable to give shortly the reasons that induced me to ask your Excellency's sanction to this journey.

The events of 1896 and the early part of 1897 were reported fully by my predecessor, and from his despatches in the archives of the Vice-Consulate it was clear that Van was continually menaced by enterprises of Armenian revolutionists, who found an asylum in the villages of Salmas, in Persia, but four or five short days' march by caravan from Van. The series of outrages and massacres of Armenians during the years 1895 and 1896, that culminated in the affair of June of the latter year, was without doubt instigated by Zekki Pasha, Mushir of the IVth Army Corps at Erzinghian, who found an able coadjutor in Sead-ud-Din Pasha, the Ferik at Van. The pretext, however, was furnished by the foolish conduct of the Armenians themselves, and more particularly of the revolutionists. When I took over charge of the Van Vice-Consulate in April 1897 I found that, though the Turkish authorities were anxious to do all in their power to maintain order, restore confidence, and enable the Armenians to resume their occupations, the constant menace from the Persian border rendered this task exceedingly difficult, if not impossible.

I accordingly went to Salmas in May 1897 to ascertain how far the rumours that were causing so much uneasiness in Van were justified by facts. I found that the revolutionists were again assembling, this time with a view to attacking Kurds inside the Turkish frontier. Great alarm was felt in Salmas, as the Kurds were expected to retaliate by sacking Christian villages. After an interview with some of the revolutionists, I paid a hasty visit to Tabreez, saw Her Majesty's Consul-General there, and returned to Van. These steps, though taken on my own responsibility, your Excellency was good enough to approve.

The meditated attack on the Kurds did not take place on the date originally assigned. The project was for the time abandoned, but about two months later positive orders, as I have since ascertained, were received from the Revolutionary Committee in London that something was to be done at once to draw the attention of Europe again to Armenian affairs, which the Turco-Greek war had caused to be put out of mind. The attack on Sheref Bey took place. This was reported at the time, but it was then impossible to give my numbers with much certainty.

From what I have heard on this journey, the strength of the party was 225. It is not true that Kurds or Persians accompanied them. They recrossed the frontier with a loss of 16 men. Over 150 Kurds were killed. A great number of these Armenians returned to Russia, some to Tabreez and elsewhere. Two bands, however, one of 27 Tashnakists, under Dikran Diroyan, who was killed at Kornbash last January, and

one of 31 Hamte Aleers, or Ler Paramas Pa mar-Jan, who was on his trial at Van when I left, passed through all the Kurds on the frontier with slight loss or difficulty, and entered the gardens at Van; 14 of the Tashnakists went to Bitlis. These occurrences were reported by me from time to time, and as later information proves that the reports then sent were substantially correct, it does not appear necessary to make further reference to the matter.

Sheref Bey, about the end of August, when he had recovered from the alarm into which he was thrown by the attack made upon him, entered Persian territory with 300 Mersiki Kurds. He was accompanied by Salim Bey, son of Badras Khan, with 300 Shemsiki Kurds. They attacked the village of Var, which is close under the hills, on the western border of the Khoi plain, a few miles to the north of the spot where the Kottur River issues from the hills.

There are a few Persians in the village, which is the property of the then Governor of Khoi, but most of the population is Armenian. This village was selected by Sheref Bey, as Armenian revolutionists had sheltered there. The Kurds butchered all they came across indiscriminately, 165 people were killed outright and 70 wounded, of whom only about 20 survived. Unfortunately, too, on this day, the wife of the Governor of Khoi had invited a lot of ladies out to Var, and these unfortunate women were all ravished by the ruffians who had made such a poor show when it was a question of facing men with arms in their hands. This latter piece of brutality was intended as a revenge on the Persian Government for permitting the revolutionists to harbour on Persian soil.

Eight other villages were robbed in passing, but only a few people killed. Presumably his conduct on this occasion had something to do with earning for Sheref Bey his promotion from Kaimakam to Mir Alai. I fear he is a fair sample of an Hamidieh officer.

I heard in Kottur that seventeen houses of Armenians, all, in fact, that remain there, were forced to become Mahommedan by Sadun Bey to save their lives. Two of the chief men among them, Kazar and Kevork by name, were killed after they had accepted Islam. The alarm caused among the Christians along the Persian frontier by these occurrences was great, whilst the situation in Van itself and the Armenian villages round was very critical. Had disturbances broken out again, it cannot be doubted but they would have been most serious, as feeling amongst the Mahommedans was very intense.

The Persian Government was at length moved to take measures to put an end to this unsatisfactory state of affairs on the frontier. They commenced by arresting about twenty-two revolutionists. Among these were four or five Russian subjects, who were handed over to the Russian authorities, and I believe released in the Caucasus. The remainder bribed the officials, and their escape was connived at. It is reported that the Zefr-e-Sultaneh and the Turkish Consul at Khoi divided 2,000 tomans between them. When the news of this escape reached the Emir Mizam, he told Zefri-Sultaneh that unless the men were recaptured he would have him brought into Tabreez. About twenty-six Armenians were accordingly seized, among whom only two or three were revolutionists. These men, after suffering brutal treatment, from which one or two died, were handed over to the Turkish authorities, and were tried at Bashkala, after an inquisitionment three of several months, during which two more died. All were condemned, but I heard before I left Van that they were to be tried again.

In October orders were received to deport all who had fled from Turkey within the last two years from the border to Tabreez and astwards. This occasion was made use of by the Persian officials for wholesale extortion. Large numbers of unfortunate people were collected and removed from the frontier. Owing to the rough treatment they received they suffered greatly; some died on the way, and many more would have done so, both on the road and on their arrival at Tabreez, had they not been succoured by missionaries. These gentlemen, of various denominations, eventually combined, addressed the Emir Mizam, and procured the rescindment of the order as far as Nestorian refugees were concerned, as these could not have had anything to do with the revolutionists.

A large number of these Turkish Nestorians have during the last two years fled to Persia. They come chiefly from the districts of Gavar and Albag. Last year nearly all that remained in Nochea left for fear of Sheikh Sadig. The action of the Government in the Diz affair, reported last June, caused the people of the lower villages to leave the valley, whilst those of Upper Diz left owing to the unchecked depredations of Oramar Kurds. The Gavar district was almost entirely abandoned by Christians owing to Shikak Kurds.

An ther occurrence that created a great stir on the Persian border, and also caused the Turkish Government a certain amount of uneasiness, was the visit of Russian priests to Urumiah. This has been made the subject of a separate report.

Early in the year, before the Armenian revolutionists had crossed the border, a great

deal of apprehension was felt particularly in Tergawur and the neighbourhood by the report that Sheikh Sadig, of Neri, in Shemdinan, whose misdeeds have been reported to your Excellency by my predecessor and myself at various times, was collecting a large number of men presumably with a view to attack Christians inside the Persian border.

Evidently he thought better of his project whatever it was, for he remained quiet throughout the year, though excesses were from time to time committed by his relatives and servants. He is aware that his exile has been urged on the Porte, and doubtless received a hint from Constantinople not to attract attention to himself. He is well informed of all that goes on.

I propose to pass through his district on my return from Persia to Van, and will report further after doing so. I have, however, been told, both in Persia and Turkey, by those well qualified to judge, that no guarantee for security on the border can exist so long as he is allowed to remain. Though he has not Sheikh Obeidullah's personal influence or capacity, he has virtually succeeded to his position as Sheikh, and ranks among Sunis Mahommedans after the Caliph and Sherif of Medina. He is said to be the only Kurd who has yet been able to combine all the Kurds along the frontier, from Ararat to Sulamaiveh, for some great enterprise, as his father did in 1880.

At the present moment when the Kurds have no particular inducement to unite for any such object, his power is not likely to be difficult, and appears most advisable.

I believe the Persian Government would most anxious that this should be done.

The Turkish Consul in Khoi seems to have given no information to his Government as to what was occurring on the Persian frontier when the revolutionists were really contemplating an attack on Turkish territory, but later, when they were broken up and dispersed, he sent most alarming reports, that were either entirely false or grossly exaggerated, thus keeping up a feeling of insecurity, and doubtless inducing the Government to send but a large number of troops into the Van. Vilayet that were there last autumn. This involved great expense and caused much hardship and loss on the troops and the inhabitants of the district they marched through or were quartered in.

Early this year reports were current in Van that the revolutionists were again assembling on the Persian frontier. The Turkish Government sent spies across from Bashkala, who returned with a report that they were in thousands in Salmas. This was manifestly an exaggeration, but I heard from a source that I considered likely to be reliable, that several hundreds of them were in Salmas and in Urumiah; that they were more numerous, better armed, and better supplied with money than before, and determined to accomplish something desperate.

As there was no means of getting reliable information, and the events of past years had proved the great importance of nipping in the bud any such projects, I asked and obtained your Excellency's sanction to go and find out what was actually the state of affairs.

It appeared desirable to leave Van before the summer roads were open. The road from Van via Serai and the Kottur valley, is used by caravans all the winter, as well as another from Van, viâ Bashkala. In spring, however, they are very difficult, owing to the soft state of the snow and the rivers being in flood. As there had been less snow than usual this year, and the season promised to open early, I started about the end of March and had considerable difficulty at first.

M. Hippius, the Russian Vice-Consul at Riza, who was acting at Van during the the winter, and was returning to his post through Persia, joined me at Khoi, and travelled with me through Salmas, Urumiah, Saj-bulak, and Meragha to Tabreez, where we parted company. Our travelling together gave rise to a good deal of speculation.

At Khoi I was told that the revolutionists had been assembling in Salmas, but on search for them being made by Persian troops, they had dispersed, and were hiding in villages to the south and east of the Urumiah Lake and elsewhere. Also that 200 had gone to Salmas to bring away concealed arms, and that in the course of a few weeks an incursion would be made from Makou and the Kurds on the Abaghu Plain attacked. I had my doubts about this information, and from what I saw and heard on my journey through the places whose names were given me, I have very little doubt but that it is false. The Turkish Consul here in Tabreez told me much the same story. It is possible that he knows no better. I propose, however, to visit Makou.

The facts of the case appear to be as follows:—

About fifteen revolutionists remained in the Salmas villages during the winter, and indulged, in the usual Armenian way, in very big talk of great deeds to be done against the Turks during the coming summer. Towards the end of winter their numbers appeared to be increasing as some Armenians, strangers, well-dressed and with nothing particular to do, were observed about the villages. They did not, however, go about as openly as they were doing last year.

Towards the end of February Persian troops were sent to search for them. Ample notice was given to the revolutionists, who left Salmas. But as happened in the preceding autumn the opportunity for extortion was not thrown away, and the resident Armenians suffered.

I have on several occasions brought to your Excellency's notice the conduct of Ali Riza Bey, the Turkish Vice-Consul at Khoi. There seems to me no doubt that he is in league with the Persian authorities to make money out of the Armenians by charging them with being revolutionists and making them pay not to be molested. He does a great deal of mischief, as there is no European Consul nearer than Tabreez to be a check on him.

All the Persian troops quartered in Salmas to keep the frontier quiet left before the Nau Ruz, and fears were expressed that the revolutionists would return later on.

I made many and careful inquiries from missionaries and natives as to the behaviour of the Persian soldiers. I was told that as was natural with men who do not receive their pay, they lived on the villagers. I particularly inquired if they molested the women, and was told they did not but I heard complaints of their levying black-mail. In Salmas there are about twenty-two purely Armenian villages. A small post of two or three men in each of these to give information as to any strangers who might appear would, I consider, effectually prevent the return of the revolutionists, and not be so serious a burden on the inhabitants as the presence of the men from whom neither property nor women are safe.

It is said here in Tabreez that the revolutionists are disheartened and have abandoned the idea of attempting anything from this direction for the present. I heard a rumour that they intended instead to make an attempt on Zeitun, using Cyprus as a base whence to smuggle rifles to the mainland. I reported this by telegram for what it may be worth.

If the Persian frontier ceases to be a sanctuary for these men, the benefit conferred on the people not only there, but above all in the whole of the Van Vilayet, will be very great indeed. Unless a feeling of security succeeds to the miserable unrest and uncertainty that have prevailed of late years, the poverty and distress will increase, and it is not difficult to foresee how it will end.

As regards the revolutionists themselves, those who take an active part in what they consider the crusade against Turkey, may, I think, be justly divided into two classes. The professional Askaser (patriot) who dislikes regular honest work, and prefers a life of excitement and the rôle of a hero, while living on the funds of the Society, and the young man or lad who is induced by the story of his peoples' wrongs and a desire to emulate the brave deeds which he hears of and which lose nothing in the telling, to devote himself to his country's cause.

Many of the former class are unscrupulous rascals, capable of any excess or ruffianism. They are more of a terror to their people than Kurds or Mahommedan officials. They quarter themselves on Christian villages, live on the best to be had, exact contributions to their funds, and make the younger women and girls submit to their will. Those who incur their displeasure are murdered in cold blood. The latter class deserves perhaps some pity, but when they place themselve in the power of the revolutionists they cease to be their own masters.

They often belong to respectable and well-to-do families.

Many merchants and others who have no sympathy with the revolutionists and their ways are obliged to contribute to their funds, and would rejoice to see these societies broken up. This, I am of opinion, would not be difficult to accomplish. The Armenian is not deficient in courage or intelligence, but his vanity, egotism, and love of talk makes it impossible for any of their plans to be kept secret. This weakness of their character and want of confidence in each other, is the cause of its being almost impossible for any large number to combine for any length of time in a common cause. Each man considers himself capable of being the leader. They have no idea of discipline or subordination, and violent quarrels sometimes ending in bloodshed break out among them.

The feeble and imperfectly carried out measures of the Persian Government seem to have produced an effect far beyond what could have been expected, considering the agents to whom they were intrusted and the means that were employed.

It will be some compensation for the misery and suffering caused by these repressive measures if they eventually prove, as seems now very likely, to be successful.

I have made the question of the smuggling of rifles the subject of a separate report. There is, however, an almost equally important one, that of passports, which deserves attention.

Most of the revolutionists are provided with passports whith a Russian *visé*. Their chief men are notorious, well known by name and appearance in the bazaars here, and doubtless in Russia also.

It may be possible to pass the frontier without passports, but if more care were exercised in this matter and in searching bales of goods consigned by or to suspected parties for arms, a very considerable check would be given to revolutionary movements in this quarter.

As regards the attitude of the Russian authorities towards the revolutionists, it appears to be one of indifference. The latter sometimes give out that they act with the approval and assistance of the Russian Government; but this does not at present appear credible.

Several instances have occurred of revolutionists, Russian subjects, who have been handed over to the authorities in the Caucasus by the Turkish or Persian Governments, being released after a short detention without trial. This is to be regretted.

Reports were rife in Salmas and Urumiah among the Christians of large movements of Russian troops towards Kars. Bearing in mind the general political situation, I did not attach importance to them, even if they were true. Doubtless, if the difficulties in China had not been satisfactorily surmounted, these troops would have been used to forward Russian interests in Asia Minor.

After our experiences in Turkey, Mr. Hippins and I were much struck with the wealth and comparative civilization of the districts we passed through.

The Persian Government has not the power of enforcing its will that the Turkish has; but the people, more particularly the Christians, seem to enjoy more liberty and be better off in every way.

Large and fairly clean caravanserai are to be found in all important places; the roads, though unmetalled, exist, and the larger streams are crossed by masonry bridges in tolerable repair.

It is said that land suitable for fruit or vines return 30 per cent., and that if a plot of land be purchased and poplars planted round the edge, in twelve or fifteen years the trees will be fit to cut for building purposes, and their value will cover the purchase money.

It is noticeable that in many places the Kurds have settled and become prosperous and industrious citizens. The town of Suj-bulak is mainly Kurdish. This is the entrance to Persia of the Mosul trade.

A civilized people inhabiting a rich country naturally have not only many needs, but also the means of gratifying them. Most of the articles in daily use, such as lamps, cutlery, crockery, glass, ornaments, certain fabrics, candles, toilet-soap, &c., are coarse and inferior articles of Russian make. The closing of the Batum–Baku Railway to through goods traffic heavily handicaps the wares of other nations. I heard, however, at Suj-bulak that Manchester goods came there through Mosul.

The large amount of raisins and almonds which the district produces go chiefly to Russia. The five vineyards produce thirty different kinds of grapes, and, if attention were paid to it, capital wine could be made in the districts of Urumiah and Mergawar.

A great deal of corn and rice is grown round the lake, particularly in the valley of the Baren-duz River and the Solduz Plain. Cotton and tobacco are to be found in places. The latter in some quantity.

In view of the fact that British trade, in spite of the disadvantages under which it labours, still maintains a footing in this country, it seems advisable to study the question of opening up routes from the south, and enable it to enter and oust the trash with which Russia now floods the bazaars.

The events of recent years in Turkey have not been without their effect on Persia, and the good feeling that formerly existed between Christians and Moslems has suffered considerably.

The Government officials seem to have latterly become more oppressive. The Russian Mission of last year aggravated this state of affairs, while its withdrawal damaged Russian prestige, and with it that of Europeans generally.

There are in the districts I visited the following Missions:—

1. American Mission, established 1835. Head-quarters Urumiah, where they have a college, female seminary, and medical school.

2. The Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission, Urumiah, which is well enough known.

3. Lazarist Fathers, in Urumiah and Kho-rova (Salmas), where they have large establishments.

4. German Orphanages, Urumiah.

Also a few independent charitable agencies not belonging to any particular Mission. but supported by contributions from England, America, and Germany.

The Americans have also a large establishment in Tabreez, and pastors in Meraghа, Saj-bulak, Salmas, and other places.

The Table, Inclosure 4 in No. 1, gives approximately the number of Christians near the Lake of Urumiah and Tabreez, among whom the Missions work. It will be noticed that out of an estimated total of 55,540, 42,520 live almost immediately on the Perso-Turkish frontier. The total numbers of the two nationalities are fairly evenly balanced, being roughly 26,000 Nestorians against 29,000 Armenians.

The Nestorians, however, are not so scattered as the Armenians, being nearly all found between the Urumiah Lake and the Turkish frontier, more particularly in the neighbourhood of Urumiah itself. The Nestorians are carpenters, bricklayers, and cultivators chiefly; but amongst the Armenians are many well-to-do merchants, who trade chiefly with Russia.

Everywhere I noticed that the people were looking toward to the day when Russia would occupy Azarbijan. A great number of them pass to and fro between Russia and Persia, and the contrast between what they see north of the Aras and what they have to suffer from at home renders this feeling very intelligible. Some of the principal Mahommedans, too, have openly stated that they will view the appearance of the Russians with satisfaction, as the present régime weighs heavily on all.

I am naturally unaware of the views held by Her Majesty's Government on the subject of a Russian occupation of Azarbijan. If they are not prepared to acquiesce in such an arrangement and to quietly accept the fact that British prestige in these parts is but lightly esteemed, it would seem advisable and urgent to establish on the frontier a capable and experienced Agent of British blood.

It is impossible for the Consul-General here (in Tabreez) to obtain satisfactory information of what passes there.

These districts have been a sanctuary for men whose avowed object is to create anarchy in Turkey, and so bring about the crisis that the Powers of Europe have been striving to defer. That they have not been more successful is due to defects in their character rather than to the precautionary measures taken by the Persian Government.

These measures have borne heavily on the inoffensive Christian inhabitants whose industry and thrift have done so much to make these districts prosperous, and whose lives have, thanks to the revolutionists, Kurds and officials, been anything but tranquil of late.

It now appears almost certain that the Russian Mission which turned out such a fiasco last year will return, and the probabilities are strong that a Russian Vice-Consul will be sent to Urumiah. There can be very little doubt that if this takes place there will be very few Christians who will not join the Orthodox Church and claim Russian protection.

Russian movements in this quarter will, if they concern us at all, require close watching. The presence of a British Agent on the spot would be imperatively necessary for this purpose, and it would help to secure some such moderate measure of justice and good government as would make the people cease to yearn to be under the meddlesome restrictions of Russian officialdom.

All pretext for Russian intervention would be removed, British prestige would be raised, British trade interests protected, and people would realize that British protection can be as efficacious as Russian.

I have, &c.
(Signed) G. S. ELLIOT.

Inclosure 1 in No. 72.

TABULAR Statement showing approximately Numbers of Christians near the Lake of Urumiah and Tabreez City, and their Distribution.

(A. Armenian. N. Nestorian.)

Name of District.	Where situated.	Number of Villages.	Total Population.		Remarks.
Urumiah, Dizaye-Mamdeh, and Sidlay	Along west side of Urumiah Lake	14	2,000	N.	
	A few scattered villages to the south-west corner of lake	28	3,000	N.	Twenty-two of the villages are purely Armenian, the inhabitants of the remainder where they are Sabians.
Khoi	Away from Urumiah Lake and north of Salmas	No data to hand	1,800	A.	Population is estimated at about 200 houses.
Maku	North of Salmas, south of Ararat mountain, west corner of Persia	8	720	A.	Three villages at present in a disturbed state. Population is estimated at 120 houses.
Sujbulak	South of lake	City and two villages	1,000	A.	400 houses. The other following districts do not belong to Urumiah Province, but are near enough to it to come under the preceding.
Miandoab	South of lake and east of Saj-bulak	3	450	A.	70 houses.
Mamagan	East of lake	Ditto and two villages	1,200	A.	210 houses.
Ilkanch	Northeast of lake	6	1,000	A.	300 houses. There are two or three Nestorian houses, and a flourishing Nestorian population of about 150 people, chiefly servants.
Khoshab	North of Tabreez	3	900	A.	160 houses.
Tasmaje	North of Tabreez and running along south of Aras River	27	5,250	A.	850 houses.
Mendeh	East of Tabreez, not far from Caspian	15	240	A.	40 houses.
		Total ..	55,540		

Tabreez, May 6, 1895.

(Signed) G. S. ELLIOT. *Her Britannic Majesty's Vice-Consul.*

Inclosure 5 in No. 72.

Captain Elliot to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 19.)

Tabreez, May 7, 1898.

Sir,

I HAVE the honour to inclose herewith reports from the Rev. A. R. Edington, Head of the English Mission at Urumiah, and the Rev. F. G. Coan, of the American Mission at the same place, on the visit of two Russian priests to Urumiah last year.

Both these reports show the state of excitement into which every one in those parts was thrown by the event.

It appears clear that it is not spiritual benefits that are so eagerly sought after, but temporal advantages in the shape of political protection.

From what I have heard here and seen in the Russian and English papers, it appears certain that the Mission will return.

If it does, the effect produced will be if possible greater than that of last year, and it is hardly possible that the Nestorians in Turkey will be unaffected.

The term Syrians in Mr. Edington's Report is the one used by the English Mission for Nestorians. The people of this nation who are Roman Catholics are called Chaldeans by the French missionaries.

Should it appear desirable to maintain English interests in Azarbijan, the English Mission should receive every encouragement to remain. The presence of these gentlemen would be an evidence that England has not ceased to take an interest in the people, and the protection afforded to them would be a visible proof that English prestige has not ceased to exist.

I have, &c.

(Signed) G. S. ELLIOT.

Inclosure 6 in No. 72.

Report on the Russian Mission to Nestorian Christians in Urumiah and the neighbourhood.

FOR very many years past the Syrians in common with other Eastern Christians, have been eagerly desiring temporal assistance and support from the European Powers, and since Russia is both the nearest and the best known to them, their hopes were mainly directed to her.

For many years the Syrians have been in communication with Russia, asking for assistance, and at one time the two Bishops in Persia went to Russia but failed to obtain any satisfactory answer.

One of them went to England, and later a request was made by Mar Shimun, the Catholicos and Patriarch of the Syrians to the Archbishop of Canterbury, asking him to send priests here to establish schools for training native priests, thinking that by this means they would also secure temporal advantages in political protection and financial assistance.

The request was granted by the Archbishop of Canterbury, but the results have not been nearly so great as their somewhat unreasonable hopes had led them to expect.

Previous to this, and during the time many Syrians had placed themselves under the control of the French and American Missions, from both of which they have received support, though not to that extent which they had desired, and this is especially the case with regard to the political assistance.

The Syrians have, therefore, secretly continued to ask for assistance and chiefly from Russia as being their powerful and best known neighbour till recently with at times but faint hopes seemed to be on the point of being realized.

In the early part of last year rumours were rife of the coming of a Russian Mission, and in May two Orthodox priests, one a Russian archpriest from the neighbourhood of Erivan, the other a Syrian, whose father had settled in Russia, entered Urumiah, and were received by almost the whole Christian population with every expression of extravagant delight and enthusiasm.

Mar Yonan, the only surviving Bishop of the Nestorians in the plain of Urumiah, took the lead in according to them a hearty welcome, and after a few days spent in Urumiah, for necessary rest after their journey, during which complimentary visits were

paid, Mar Yonan accompanied them to his diocese of Superghan and the district of the Nazhi Chi.

On reaching the village of Superghan they assembled the people in the churchyard, explained to them the terms in which they would be received into communion with the Holy Orthodox Eastern Church (*e.g.*, renunciation of Nestorianism and acceptance of the Orthodox faith, especially Θεοτόκος and a promise to pray for the Czar, &c.).

These terms were gladly accepted by the people, and almost without exception the whole of the village was enrolled. As far as I know, no great pressure was put upon any one, the hope of obtaining political support being in itself a more than sufficient inducement.

There were at this time a large number of refugees from the mountains then residing in Superghan, and throughout the district. These being Turkish subjects were not enrolled. I believe, also, in places a few Armenians were enrolled, but their names were entered in a separate register.

That which took place in Superghan was repeated in the other villages of the Nazhi Chi district, and in every case with the same result. Practically, only those who were in receipt of regular wages from the various Missions withheld their signatures, and they only did so for a time to see how matters would turn up.

Meanwhile the Persian officials were becoming very uneasy, for it was clear that exactly the same thing would happen in other districts as had happened in the above-mentioned diocese, and in that case it seemed to the authorities that the whole Christian population would in but a short time pass from under their control.

This induced the authorities to bring various charges (principally law-suits as to the proprietorship of lands and vineyards) against those Christians whose districts had not yet been visited by the Russian priests. These charges were unfounded, but by this means the Sarparast and Governor were enabled to gain very considerable sums of money.

The Russian priests had completed the enrolment of the Nazhi Chi districts. They returned to Urumiah and spoke of doing, after a short interval, the same thing in the diocese of the late Mar Gauriel. Considering, however, the amount of hostility they were exciting in the minds of the Mussulmans by their action, they thought it better to ask for further instructions from Russia.

Suddenly instructions came ordering their recall to Russia.

The people who had been enrolled were, therefore, left to themselves hardly knowing what their position was temporally or spiritually.

Those, like the Bishop Mar Yonan, who had taken an active part in writing or openly furthering the interests of the Russian Mission found it impossible to remain with safety in Persia after the withdrawal of the priest, and went to Russia; news has since reached us of the reception of Mar Yonan, and a few of his clergy who were with him, into the Russian Church.

I have good authority for saying that the Mission was but one of investigation and that, therefore, the priests exceeded their instructions.

This seems difficult to believe entirely, for they openly enrolled the people, and this in itself occupied them several months, during which the whole matter must have been well known in Russia. It is said that from 10,000 to 12,000 names were enrolled. The priests, too, spoke openly of their Mission having very high sanction and said that troops were on the frontier, if disturbances should arise in Persia. They also assured every one that a Consul was on his way to Urumiah, and that they were from week to week expecting his arrival.

After all this it was a great surprise to all (themselves, I believe, included) when they received instructions to return at once.

It seems certain that the Mission will shortly return, and one may be sure that measures are being taken to insure its not being a fiasco as in this present case.

Everyone, almost without exception, was extremely willing to receive them and to accept the terms offered, hoping for, and expecting in exchange, very substantial protection. If this can be afforded them, the people will be as eager as before.

Up to the present, the only result of the arrival of the Russian Mission has been to increase the hostility between Mussulmans and Christians, and their sudden withdrawal very considerably lowered the prestige of the Russian name; it also gave occasion for additional exactions by the Persian officials.

(Signed) ARTHUR R. EDINGTON, M.A.,

Head of the Archbishop of Canterbury's Mission

Inclosure 7 in No. 72.

Account of the Russian Mission to Urumiah, Persia: May–October, 1898.

FOR a good many years there were rumours of a Russian Mission to the Nestorians of Urumiah. It was known that at different times Petitions, signed by the bishops and priests of the old church as well as other prominent men, had been sent to Russia asking them to establish a Mission here, the hope being that through such an agency some protection could be secured against the increasing exactions and oppressions of the Persian Government. Last winter it was announced that the Petitions sent had been favourably received, and that Russian priests, accompanied by Cossacks and to be followed by a Consul, were actually on their way and would arrive at Easter time. In May two Russian priests arrived, coming viâ Tabreez, and accompanied by one of the family servants of the Russian Consul at Tabreez.

Thousands went out to meet them with most extravagant demonstrations of joy. The Moslems were told their day was at an end, and that their lands would be taken and handed over to the Christians, that they would henceforth act as servants to the Christians. Nestorian horsemen galloped their horses over Moslem fields of grain the day the Russians entered, and some who ventured near the procession were roughly treated and insulted.

The two priests were Victor Michaelovitch and Simoon.

The former was said to come from a family of some rank. Simoon was the son of Nestorians who had migrated to Russia after the war with Persia in 1827 and 1828. They settled near Erivan, where their son was born and brought up in the Orthodox faith. Speaking Syriac well he acted as interpreter to his companion.

Their head-quarters for about two weeks after their arrival were at the city of Urumiah, where great numbers, including Jews as well as all classes of Christians, called on them.

The Nestorian Bishop, Mar Yonan, who had before they reached Persia become thoroughly converted to the Orthodox faith, invited them after two weeks to his village, Superghan, on the Nazloo River.

The crowds that came out to meet them as they neared the village were even greater than those on the day of their arrival. Sejovars were brought out with other refreshments and stronger drink, and they were welcomed with music and dancing.

After resting in the village a few days they started out on a tour through all the villages on that river, these belonging to the diocese of a bishop; he had publicly—before thousands—denounced Nestorious as a heretic, and expected his whole flock to follow him to the new faith.

Accompanying the party on its tour were four or five other Nestorians, priests as well as laymen.

These were responsible for all the wild reports that were constantly circulated among the people, as to the purpose of the Mission, and there was no lie or deception to which they did not stoop in order to, if possible, carry the whole nation with them.

Their programme was as follows:—After arriving at a village and securing headquarters, the church bell was rung as a signal for the whole village to assemble. The Russian priests then briefly read and explained the creed of the Orthodox Church, told the people just what was involved in signing their adherence to it, and urged them to act deliberately. In no case did they use any threats or force. Two books were kept. In one of them were written the names of all who came over from the old Nestorian Church, and in the other those who joined from the Armenian, Catholic, or Protestant communions. The Nestorians went over *en masse*, as they did not dare oppose their Bishop. Quite a number of Armenians and Catholics also joined and some Presbyterians; although, in the case of the latter, most of them remained firm. While the Russian priests were fair in all they did, the same could not be said of the bishop and his satellites. Not only were most extravagant promises made to all who would join the Orthodox Church, such as that they would receive lands and money, and be free from all oppression and tyranny, but, on the other hand, all sorts of anathemas were pronounced against any who refused to have their names written. They were told that their lands would be confiscated, their churches would be taken away from them, no religious privileges would be accorded them, and when the new Government came in they would not be recognized, and would be banished to Siberia.

In many cases force was resorted to, different parties visited the houses of the obdurate ones, and dragged them by force to the place of conscription. One woman was asked why she wept so when her name was written, and before she could reply they were told that she had just heard of the death of a near friend.

About 7,000 or 8,000 names were secured on the Nazloo River, and when the circuit had been completed the whole country was plunged into great excitement. The air was full of the most absurd rumours, and even the Khans did not know but what they were to be deposed and driven out. Concerning one of them a report was circulated that he had been fined 10,000 tomans for urging his riats to remain firm and not join the Orthodox Church. Although the report was a pure fabrication, he kept quiet until the whole thing had blown over, and has since then been squeezing his subjects well, telling them that as the fine was a large one they must help him share it.

At this period matters got so beyond control that it was deemed unwise for the Russian priests to visit the two remaining districts of the City and Barandoos Rivers in person, so Nestorian priests were sent to secure names quietly. All of the villages were not visited, as Moslem feeling ran so high that some did not dare incur further displeasure by joining the Russians, and many who by this time had their eyes opened and saw what a farce the whole thing was, lost interest in it, so that comparatively few names were secured in these districts.

Early in November the priests silently folded their tents and disappeared. With them fled the bishop and others who had been too prominent in the whole movement. The names of these had been given to the Persian Government as traitors, and none of them would have been safe after the Russian priests left. It is reported that the Persian Government sent officers after them to arrest them, but they had just crossed the Aras when they arrived there.

They are still in Russia, where all sorts of encouraging things are being continually written and preposterous promises made to keep up the ebbing hope of those who had staked every thing on this move, and now slowly realize how woefully they have been sold.

A new lot of priests with many Cossacks were to have been here by Easter. But as another Easter comes and goes they are not here. There is no doubt that if they came with any authority, the bulk of the Nestorians would go over to them.

(Signed) FREDK. G. COAN,
American Missionary at Urumiah.

No. 73.

Mr. de Bunsen to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(*Received June* 13.)

(No. 335. Confidential.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, June* 7, 1898.

WITH reference to my immediately preceding despatch, I have the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Van respecting his travels in Persia in company with M. Hippins, the Russian Vice-Consul at Riza.

I have, &c.
(Signed) M. DE BUNSEN.

Inclosure in No. 73.

Captain Elliot to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 20. Confidential.)
Sir, *Tabreez, May* 6, 1898.

I HAVE the honour to report that M. Hippins, Russian Vice-Consul at Riza, near Trebizond, who has been Acting Vice-Consul at Van during the winter, returned to his post through Persia, and travelled with me from Khoi to Tabreez.

Socially, he is most straightforward and agreeable, and has a large share of common sense and shrewdness.

My experience of him at Van was, however, that in business matters it was not advisable to place very much reliance on him.

This I attribute not so much to bad faith as to the fact that Russian officials, at any rate those in the lower posts, seem to be allowed no initiative whatever. They must keep strictly inside their orders, and any slip they may chance to make has to be answered for.

M. Hippius told me that his journey in Persia was his own idea. He wanted to avail himself of the opportunity of seeing the country, but he reckoned on his expenses being paid, and his action approved when his report was presented.

I do not think he received orders to make this journey, but probably he had taken means to ascertain that it would be favourably regarded before he undertook it.

M. Petrow, the Russian Consul-General in Tabreez, even if he could spare time from his ordinary duties, is too old to find travelling in this country agreeable, and it would be hard to find a man better qualified than M. Hippius for the purpose.

Russian prestige has suffered on the frontier owing to the Mission of last year to the Nestorians having left without fulfilling the great expectations it excited.

The alarming statements about the number of Armenian revolutionists in Persia, most of whom were Russian subjects armed with Russian military rifles, appeared also to require investigation.

M. Hippius made many and precise inquiries, and took copious notes. Though his observations seemed to be always very much to the point, it was difficult to imagine what use he intended to make of the mass of detailed information he collected on every conceivable subject. He took the numbers of every Russian rifle he saw.

The Russian Consul-General in Tabreez is well aware of the trade in smuggled arms which is carried on with very little attempt at concealment once the Russian frontier is crossed.

I hear these arms are procured from the arsenals in Russia by bribing officials. It is possible M. Petrow is unwilling to stir up the mud. He struck me as a very shrewd and good-natured old man.

The people in the districts we passed through could not understand how a Russian and English official could travel together in a friendly way, and thought the circumstance portended some great political event. The Nestorians everywhere welcomed M. Hippius very heartily, and he on his part spared no pains to make himself agreeable to the people and officials, and to all in their presence voluminous notes of all that they told him.

M. Hippius told me that he considered the presence of a Russian Vice-Consul in Urumiah most desirable, and that he intended reporting in this sense to his Government.

He made a careful reconnaissance of the road every day, and did not hesitate to compare notes with me.

He left Tabreez on the 30th April, and proposed staying a short time in Tiflis with the Governor of the Caucasus, whom he knows personally.

I have, &c.

(Signed) G. S. ELLIOT.

No. 74.

Mr. de Bunsen to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received June 13.)

(No. 359.)

My Lord, *Tarnpia, June 9, 1898.*

WITH reference to Sir P. Currie's despatch No. 225 of the 9th April, I have the honour to report that the Sublime Porte have replied unfavourably to the *pro memoriâ* of the 14th April, in which they were urged to repay out of the public funds the unrecovered balance of the sum stolen from Yusuf Yunan at the time of his murder.

On the receipt of this communication, they telegraphed to Bitlis for a report on the subject, and the Vali of that Province has answered that the allegations made in the letter written by Yusuf Yunan before his death, and bringing damaging charges against certain local officials, have not been substantiated.

The Vali states that it rests with the Relief Committee to bring a civil action against the murderers or other persons whom they suspect of taking the money, and that administratively there is nothing to be done beyond what has already led to the discovery and conviction of the murderers.

The Vali's view is supported by the Ottoman Government, which accordingly declines to act on the suggestion made in the *pro memoriâ*, and refers the Relief Committee to its legal remedy.

I may perhaps be permitted to point out that from the first it has appeared to be clear that the circumstances of the case did not warrant an official demand for the restitution of the money.

In selecting as their agent for distributing relief money in such a place as Sairt, and at such a time, a person like Yusuf Yunan, belonging himself to the persecuted community, the Relief Committee committed an act of great imprudence. Such, I understand, was the view taken of the matter by Major Williams, who was Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Van at the time, and who visited Sairt, and was well acquainted with the whole matter.

If ordinary and obvious precautions are neglected, it becomes very difficult to hold the Ottoman Government responsible for all the consequences. They can be pressed to afford every assistance in bringing the guilty parties to justice, and in exhausting the means which the law gives for recovering stolen property. Such pressure has not ceased to be applied to them by this Embassy, and the murderers have been actually tried and convicted, and a small portion of the money recovered.

It still remains for the Relief Committee to bring a civil action if they think it worth their while to do so, but it is to be feared that there are no sufficient grounds for claiming the money officially and as of right, from the Ottoman Government.

In view of the reply of the Sublime Porte, I do not propose to press the matter further without your Lordship's instructions.

I have, &c.

(Signed) M. DE BUNSEN.

No. 75.

Mr. de Bunsen to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received June 13.)

(No. 312.)

My Lord, *Constantinople, June 9, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith, copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul at Jeddah, reporting the rumoured occurrence of disturbances in the Yemen, and the consequent despatch of troops from Mecca.

I have, &c.

(Signed) M. DE BUNSEN.

Inclosure 1 in No. 75.

Consul Devey to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 46.)

Sir, *Jeddah, April 30, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to report that for four or five weeks past, sundry rumours have been obtaining as to a disturbed state of things in Yemen, that people could not go outside Hodeida with safety, that Arabs were preparing to revolt, that Menakha the halfway town between Hodeida and Sanaa was beseiged, and that the latter city was menaced; and now there is a further rumour that a battalion of Turkish troops has been annihilated by Arabs, who are supposed to be fairly well armed in that neighbourhood; while it is certain that four battalions of infantry, viz., from Mecca, under Lieutenant-Colonel Sabit Bey (and without guns), are to leave Ras-ul-Aswad for the Yemen to-morrow.

Our Vice-Consul for Hodeida and Camaran has made no mention of disturbances likely to occur, though I have received news from him up to the 21st instant from the Lazaret when he was busy preparing reports.

It is of course possible that the "battalion annihilated" may turn out to have been but a corporal's guard in a village; still, the dispatch of a considerable military force gives reason for believing that the revolutionary movement is serious, making due allowance for exaggerated reports as customary in Arabia

The battalions above referred to form, presumably, a force not more than 1,300 strong.

I have, &c.
(Signed) G. P. DEVEY

P.S.—May 3. The disturbed district is said to be Hajur, a caza of the Hodeida Sandjak.

G. P. D.

P.S.—May 8. Two inclosures are added.

G. P. D.

Inclosure 2 in No. 75.

Vice-Consul Ahmed to Consul Devey.

(No. 22.)
Sir, *Hodeida, May 1, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to send the following information received by me:—

About the second week of the last month, at a place named Hajoor, about four days' journey from this place, ten troopers and sixty foot soldiers have been killed by some Arabs.

On the third week of the same month, the Arab tribes of Neshar, and Madhi Kha, came to a place in the interior named Kopal, about three days' march from Hodeida, killed a major and 150 soldiers, and took away with them fifty as prisoners.

I have the honour further to inform you that, about five months ago, it is said something like famine commenced in some parts in the interior of the Yemen, and now it has spread over a large portion of the province.

I have, &c.
(Signed) T. N. AHMED

Inclosure 3 in No. 75.

Vice-Consul Ahmed to Consul Devey.

(No. 23.)
Sir, *Hodeida, May 1, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to report that last week Faizi Pasha, Commander-in-chief and Governor-General of the Yémén, has been, by a telegraphic order from Constantinople, dismissed, and it is believed here that, from this time forth, separate persons shall be appointed as Civil Governor-General, and Commander-in-chief of the army, for the Yémén.

Last week, Kiamil Pasha, a Lieutenant-General, arrived here to take the command of the Hodeida district from Colonel Ahmed Bey, who had been sent here over a year ago from Jeddah, and who has been ordered to go to the interior, where the district is in a disturbed state.

I have, &c.
(Signed) T. N. AHMED.

No. 76.

Mr. de Bunsen to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received June 13.)

(No. 313.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, June 9, 1898.*

WITH reference to the despatch No 202 of the 17th ultimo, from Sir P. Currie.

I have the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith, copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Sivas, respecting the recent murders and abductions in that vilayet.

I have, &c.
(Signed) M. DE BUNSEN.

Inclosure in No. 76.

Captain Maunsell to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 38.)
Sir, *Sivas, May 29, 1898.*

IN continuation of my despatch No. 35 of the 8th May, I have the honour to report that, in the case of the murders at Maksudlu, the Kaïmakam of Charkishla appears to have acted energetically on learning the news, and to have obtained clear proofs implicating at least two men.

The procurator (mustantic) sent from Sivas has opened a desultory sort of inquiry, avoiding important evidence, and aims at letting the matter drag along until it can safely be hushed up.

The case is a flagrant one, as the murders were committed quite close to the Moslem village of Maksudlu, and the hushing up of the case, probably by direct orders of the Vali, is having a bad effect on the country.

The murder of the second Armenian at Koch-hissar occurred as follows:—

About ten days previously he had been severely beaten by some Moslems, and from this he subsequently died, his death being certified as due to natural causes.

The richest of the Circassians imprisoned for the murder of Armenians at Yar-hissar in January last, has now been released without trial

The seven men imprisoned at Charkishla for the abduction of Armenian girls at Chepni, have been released without the case being even forwarded to the Courts for trial

In Chepni, a large mixed village of 100 Moslem and 100 Armenian houses, are several rich Moslems, notably Hatem Agha, and Kara Osman, who appear to think they have the right to abduct any good-looking wife or girl they see in an Armenian house, and carry her off to slavery in their harems.

The woman abducted from Chepni, who was kept here in Ibrahim Effendi's house is now to be sent back to Chepni from Charkishla, her return to her native village being marked by music and public rejoicings, after which she will be safely shut up in one of those Notable's houses.

The more than ordinarily open way with which the Vali takes bribes, and with which justice is bought and sold, causes discontent among all sections of the population.

I have, &c.
(Signed) F. R. MAUNSELL.

No. 77.

The Marquess of Salisbury to Mr. de Bunsen.

(No. 136.)
Sir, *Foreign Office, June 14, 1898.*

I HAVE received your despatch No. 325 of the 31st ultimo, inclosing a report from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Sivas respecting the abduction and enforced conversion of Armenian girls in his Consular district.

I approve your action in this matter and your instructions to Captain Maunsell to see the Vali of Sivas again on the subject when the further orders, which are to be sent from Constantinople, are received.

I am, &c.
(Signed) SALISBURY.

No. 78.

Consul Stevens to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received June 20.)

(No. 13.)
My Lord, *Batoum, May 25, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to inform your Lordship that, at the suggestion of the Governor-General of the Caucasus, the Russian Government has just published a Proclamation, which received the sanction of His Imperial Majesty on the 25th April (6th May) last, to the effect that all immigrants of Armenian extraction and Turkish nationality residing in the Governments of Baku, Kutais, Tiflis, and Erivan, and in the Province of Kars, will have to quit this country within a period of one year from the date of the issue of the Proclamation.

In connection with this measure, the police master of this town has to-day issued an order calling upon all Armenians who are Turkish subjects residing in Batoum to notify him, by the 15th (27th) June next, of their intention to quit the Caucasus for Turkey, and that all Armenian immigrants who do not comply with this order by that date will be expelled by him from the country.

I have, &c.
(Signed) P. STEVENS.

No. 79.

Mr. de Bunsen to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received June 20.)

(No. 347.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, June 10, 1898.*

WITH reference to Sir P. Currie's despatch No. 191 of the 29th March last, I have the honour to report that the Sublime Porte has dropped the prosecution of M. Brazzafolli, the agent of the Austrian Lloyd at Mersina, and that he and the other political prisoners, who were on their way to Adrianople for trial, have been set at liberty.

I have, &c.
(Signed) M. DE BUNSEN.

No. 80

Mr. de Bunsen to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received June 20.)

(No. 350.)
My Lord, *Therapia, June 15, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to report that I have received an application from Mr. Monahan, Her Majesty's Consul at Bitlis, for authorization to go to Mush in order to inquire into the distribution of Armenian relief.

Mr. Monahan wishes to return by Tadvan, where a priest and two other men are said to have been tortured by gendarmes.

As Mr. Monahan thinks the matter pressing, I have ventured to sanction the proposed journey without previous reference to your Lordship.

I have, &c.
(Signed) M. DE BUNSEN.

No. 81.

Mr. de Bunsen to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received June 22.)

(No. 135.)
(Telegraphic.) P. *Constantinople, June 22, 1898, 9:30 A.M.*

FOLLOWING information has been communicated to Military Attaché :—

The disturbance in Yemen has been quelled. Insurgents surrounded the new Vali on his way to Sana, but he has been rescued by Turkish troops. The force in the Yemen is being raised to 22,500 men as a precautionary measure.

No. 82.

Armenian Central Revolutionary Committee to the Marquess of Salisbury.
(Received June 24.)

M. le Ministre, *Paris, le 23 Juin, 1898.*

LE Comité Central Révolutionnaire Arménien a l'honneur de porter à votre connaissance les faits suivants relatifs à l'état des choses en Turquie.

Un Envoyé spécial du Sultan arriva à Paris le 20 Novembre, 1897; il était chargé par le Gouvernement Ottoman de sonder les intentions des révolutionnaires Arméniens, de tâcher de savoir s'ils seraient disposés à entrer en pourparlers avec un Délégué plus qualifié pour traiter officiellement au nom du Sultan, et de mettre ainsi un terme à la situation douloureuse où se débat la Turquie.

No. 79*.

Mr. de Bunsen to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received June 20.)

(No. 349.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, June 15, 1898.*

WITH reference to my despatch No. 339 of the 9th instant, I have the honour to transmit to your Lordship herewith a copy of a Memorandum which I have received from the Sublime Porte, stating that no evidence has been brought forward to show that the unrecovered portion of the sum of money taken from Yusuf Yunan at the time of his death was ever in the possession of the murderers or their families.

I have, &c.
(Signed) M. DE BUNSEN.

Inclosure in No. 79*.

Memorandum.

LE Gouverneur-Général du Vilayet de Bitlis, interpellé de nouveau à la suite du *pro memoria* en Turc de l'Ambassade de Sa Majesté Britannique concernant le meurtre de Yousouf Yunan, télégraphie que d'après le Rapport de la Commission *ad hoc*, les sommes arrivées à différentes reprises à l'adresse du défunt étaient de 191,172½ piastres, et que celui-ci en avait déjà distribué les 163,415 piastres. Comme plus tard 7,259 piastres ont été recouvrées des brigands et remises par le soin du Tribunal au fondé de pouvoirs de la Société de Secours Anglaise, la somme qui n'a pu être découverte est de 20,177½ piastres.

Il appartenait au fondé de pouvoirs du défunt de poursuivre l'affaire devant le Tribunal et de prouver que la somme en question se trouvait ou la possession des agresseurs ou de leurs parents. Mais il n'a rien fait à cet effet. Comme les autorités locales n'ont pu de leur côté recueillir, malgré toutes leurs recherches, aucun indice à ce sujet, il ne leur reste plus rien à faire.

Sublime Porte, le 12 Juin, 1898.

La révolution n'est pas pour les Arméniens un but, mais seulement un moyen d'obtenir les réformes nécessaires. Le Comité Central ne vit donc aucune raison de principe s'opposant à des négociations de ce genre, d'autant plus qu'elles étaient proposées par le Sultan lui-même.

Après des pourparlers préliminaires entre cet Envoyé spécial et le Comité, son Excellence Munir Bey, Ambassadeur Ottoman à Paris, fut chargé par la Sublime Porte, d'entrer directement en négociations avec le Comité Central.

Les propositions qu'il apporta étaient loin d'être suffisantes et ne répondaient pas aux plus légitimes désirs de la nation Arménienne. Cependant le Comité ne voulut y voir que l'indice d'une bonne volonté réelle et de l'intention où il était de procéder aux réformes annoncées d'ailleurs par ses promesses réitérées.

Enfin, pour témoigner de la sincérité de ces dispositions conciliantes son Excellence Munir Bey promettait, au nom du Sultan, l'amnistie sans restriction et la cessation des mesures vexatoires à l'égard des Arméniens ; il donnait notamment l'assurance que les Arméniens émigrés au cours des massacres pourraient rentrer dans leurs foyers sans être inquiétés aucunement par la police ni par les autorités.

Ces propositions furent acceptées par le Comité.

Le projet d'entente communiqué à Constantinople fut sanctionné par un Iradé que Munir Bey transmit au Comité authentiqué de son sceau.

Connaissant à fond les sentiments de la nation Arménienne le Comité était assuré qu'après la promulgation officielle de l'Iradé et son exécution tous les Arméniens contribueraient par leur concours loyal à l'œuvre de l'apaisement.

Cependant, depuis la communication de cet Iradé, dont votre Excellence trouvera ci-joint le résumé, aucun acte n'est venu confirmer la sincérité effective des dispositions du Sultan et l'Iradé est demeuré lettre morte. Au contraire, de nouvelles et nombreuses arrestations d'Arméniens ont été opérées à Constantinople et dans les provinces.

Le Comité Central regrette que les négociations dues à l'initiative du Sultan aient abouti finalement à un résultat aussi infructueux, alors que les suites d'une entente auraient été aussi heureuses pour le Sultan que pour les Arméniens.

L'inexécution de l'Iradé fera sur toute notre nation la plus douloureuse impression et nous rejetons sur le Gouvernement Impérial la responsabilité des conséquences graves que pourrait provoquer sa conduite.

Veuillez, &c.

(Le Parti Révolutionnaire Arménien, Comité Central.)

Inclosure in No. 82.

Résumé of Imperial Iradé transmitted to the Armenian Committee.

QUE le Créateur de l'Univers conserve pour toujours Sa Majesté, notre auguste Maître, sur le Trône des Ottomans.

Au nom de Sa Majesté Impériale le Sultan, je déclare que dans le désir de pouvoir rétablir le bon accord parmi les sujets Impériaux et renouveler les relations amicales entre eux, l'amnistie générale est accordée à tous ceux des Arméniens qui, trompés par des intrigues, se sont égarés de la voie de fidélité, et qui ont pris part aux agitations. Amnistie générale est accordée également au Comité Arménien, siégeant en Europe, et qui fut l'auteur des mouvements révolutionnaires.

Au fur et à mesure que la population Arménienne prouvera de sa fidélité, et que par conséquent les liens fraternels seront renoués entre elle et les Musulmans, au grand contentement de Sa Majesté Impériale, dont la confiance augmentera de jour en jour, le passé sera tout à fait couvert par la clémence et le pardon Impérial, les Arméniens participeront largement aux bienfaits dont jouissent les autres populations fidèles. Ceux parmi les amnistiés qui sont capables, seront appelés à des postes administratifs selon leurs aptitudes ; des facilités et des secours matériels seront donnés à ceux qui en ont besoin.

Ambassadeur Ottoman à Paris,
(Signé) SALIH MUNIR.

Paris, le 15 *Avril*, 1898.

No. 83.

The Marquess of Salisbury to Mr. de Bunsen.

(No. 85.)
(Telegraphic.) P. *Foreign Office, June 24, 1898, 1·5 P.M.*

I HAVE received your telegram No. 136 of the 23rd instant, forwarding a proposal from Her Majesty's Consul at Erzeroum that he should accompany the Vali on a tour in his province for about fifteen days at a cost of 30*l.*

I sanction the proposed journey at the estimated cost.

No. 84.

Mr. de Bunsen to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received June 27.)

(No. 360.)
Therapia, June 18, 1898.

My Lord,

THE Armenian Community is much agitated in consequence of the interference of the Sublime Porte in the election of a new Catholicos of Sis.

Your Lordship is aware that each of the ecclesiastical centres of Echmiazin, Aghthamar, and Sis is the seat of an Armenian Catholicos.

Echmiazin, being now in Russian territory, has lost its importance from a Turkish point of view, but the great majority of Armenian Bishops still go there to be consecrated. Aghthamar has sunk to an entirely subordinate position. Sis is the centre of some twelve or thirteen Bishoprics, and is looked up to as the ecclesiastical metropolis of the populous Armenian districts in what was the ancient Kingdom of Cilicia.

In the eyes of the Ottoman Government the Armenian Patriarch has been hitherto the only recognized representative of the entire Armenian Community in Turkey. This has been so ever since the period immediately following the conquest of Constantinople, when a considerable Armenian population was for the first time planted in the capital from Broussa or other parts of Asia Minor, and induced to settle there under a Patriarch as a counterpoise to Greek influence.

Until 1830 the Greek Œcumenical Patriarch and the Gregorian Armenian Patriarch stood alone as representing the Eastern Churches at Constantinople in their relations with the Ottoman Power. Since that date the Porte has encouraged the separate representation of the minor Christian denominations, in pursuance of its well-known policy of dividing up the subject populations, and hence it is that, not to mention numerous other defections, the unity of the Greek and Armenian Churches has been impaired by the creation of a Bulgarian Exarch, an Armenian Catholic Patriarch, and an Armenian Protestant Vekil.

It is now feared that the process of subdivision is to be still further applied to the Gregorian Armenian Church by the severance of the historic connection between the Catholicos of Sis and the Gregorian Patriarchate.

Some five years ago the Metropolitan seat of Sis fell vacant. A Synod of Bishops assembled to nominate a new Catholicos. Their choice fell upon Bishop Aladjian, but the mixed Armenian Council (civil and religious) of Constantinople held that there were irregularities in the constitution of the Synod, and annulled the election. A discussion ensued between the Patriarchate and the Department of Public Worship in the Ministry of Justice as to the principles upon which the new election should proceed. Before a conclusion was reached, three of the Cilician Bishops took upon themselves to appoint another Bishop named Kazandian to fill the vacancy. Porte and Patriarchate agreed to reject him. He managed for a time to keep possession of the Armenian church at Adana, but was finally removed to Beirut, and the See of the Catholicos left in the hands of a deputy. Meanwhile, the negotiation with the Ministry of Justice was proceeding. At length three of the four points to which the Patriarchate attached importance were conceded. The old relation between Catholicos and Patriarch was to be upheld; the Electoral College of Sis was to be presided over by a Commissioner representing the Patriarch, the candidates to be selected from among the Cilician Bishops if a fit person could be found among them; if not, a non-local Bishop might be put forward, as in the case of the late Catholicos, who had been a Bishop of Echmiazin. Only a question as to the right of the Porte to revise the list of candidates was still the subject of discussion, and a final agreement was confidently anticipated when a few days ago, in accordance with an Imperial Iradé, a letter was addressed to the Patriarch by the Ministry of Justice, ignoring the concessions already made, and declaring that there was no need to send a Patriarchal Commissioner to Sis, and that the result of the election must be communicated directly from Sis to the Porte without any intervention whatever on the part of the Patriarch. Mgr. Ormanian was taken completely by surprise. He holds that the decision of the Palace, if carried out, would imply the complete independence of the Catholicos, and the division of the Gregorian Church into two separate units. He declares that there is no popular demand for a direct relation between Catholicos and Porte, that such a relation has never existed, and that he is resolved to resign his office rather than agree to the schism.

The attitude of the Ottoman Government is the more remarkable, inasmuch as they have of late shown a disposition to comply with the Patriarch's wishes in the case of the Armenian political prisoners. Several batches of these have just been released, such as the prisoners connected with the Brazzafolli incident at Mersina, and some of those detained at Van in connection with the Diroyan incident, and the Patriarch had been moved by the more yielding mood in which he found the Porte to press for the pardon of those who have been hitherto excluded from the benefit of the amnesty. For some time past, indeed, both the Armenian Patriarch and the leading Armenian Notables of Constantinople have sought to attain their objects by means of an understanding with the Ottoman Government rather than by relying as before on foreign assistance. They have endeavoured to restrain the Revolutionary Committees, and have discouraged the idea of European intervention on their behalf. They flattered themselves that they had thus established a kind of *modus vivendi* with the Porte, and they were quite unprepared for the threat of ecclesiastical disintegration which now hangs over them.

Their protests have evidently had some effect, for an Iradé has been issued annulling the letter of the Minister of Justice, and appointing a special Commission of Ministers to investigate the question at issue. If it is finally decided in accordance with precedent the Patriarch's right to control the election will be admitted, and the ancient relation between Catholicos and Patriarch maintained.

I have, &c.
(Signed) M. DE BUNSEN.

No. 85.

Mr. de Bunsen to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received June 27.)

(No. 362.)
Constantinople, June 19, 1898.

My Lord,

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Sivas, stating that the harvest prospects in that vilayet are good.

I have, &c.
(Signed) M. DE BUNSEN.

Inclosure in No. 85.

Vice-Consul Maunsell to Sir P. Currie.

(No. 39.)
Sivas, June 8, 1898.

Sir,

I HAVE the honour to report that, after a very anxious period during April and the first half of May, there has now been plentiful rain throughout the vilayet, and the prospects of the harvest are good.

At one time there was danger of a famine; which would have been extremely serious, considering the constant drain there has been lately on this vilayet for money for Constantinople, for the support of neighbouring provinces and maintenance of the 4th Army Corps.

I have, &c.
(Signed) F. R. MAUNSELL.

No. 86.

Mr. de Bunsen to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received June 27.)

(No. 364.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, June 21, 1898.*

WITH reference to Sir P. Currie's despatch No. 829 of the 17th December, 1897, reporting the arrest and banishment of three Kurdish Chiefs at Erzeroum, I have the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul at Erzeroum, stating that two of these Chiefs have returned to their homes, having received the Imperial pardon, while the third, Hussein Pasha, will, in all probability, soon be pardoned also.

I have, &c.
(Signed) M. DE BUNSEN.

Inclosure in No. 86.

Consul Graves to Mr. de Bunsen.

(No. 12.)
Sir, *Erzeroum, June 10, 1898.*

WITH reference to my despatch No. 48 of the 14th December, 1897, I have the honour to report that two of the Kurdish Chiefs therein referred to, namely, Emin and Hadji Temer Pashas, passed through Erzeroum this week on their way to their homes in the Van Vilayet, having received the Imperial pardon. It is still uncertain whether their companion in exile, Hussein Pasha, has shared in their pardon and will follow them, but this is regarded as at least probable.

Thus the only practical measure towards the pacification of northern Kurdistan which has yet been taken is undone, and a return has been made to the vicious policy of conciliating and truckling to the worst disturbers of the country. It is, however, a slight matter of congratulation that, so far as Emin Pasha is concerned, his return cannot be considered a triumph for the Mushir Zekki Pasha, who has quite withdrawn his favour and protection from Emin Pasha, in consequence of the telegram of complaint addressed by the latter to the Sultan, as reported in my despatch No. 46 of the 8th December, 1897.

I have, &c.
(Signed) R. W. GRAVES.

No. 87.

Mr. de Bunsen to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received June 27.)

(No. 366.)
My Lord, *Constantinople, June 22, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to forward to your Lordship herewith copy of a despatch which I have received from Her Majesty's Consul at Damascus respecting the proposed taxation of the Jebel Druses.

I have, &c.
(Signed) M. DE BUNSEN.

Inclosure in No. 87.

Consul Richards to Mr. de Bunsen.

(No. 30.)
Sir, *Damascus, June 11, 1898.*

I HAVE the honour to inform you that a few days ago the Emir Shekib Rislan, a prominent member of one of the first Druse families of the Lebanon, sent, at the request of the Vali, five special messengers with letters addressed to various parts of the Jebel Druse, advising the inhabitants of those districts to pay the tithes and sheep tax for the past year, and, in general, to be submissive and obedient to the local authorities. The Druses, who were thus appealed to, while expressing their willingness

to pay these taxes, complained somewhat bitterly of their excessive amount, at the same time pointing out that the unusually long and severe winter and the ravages of the locusts had crippled their resources to such an extent that they were unable to satisfy the demands of the tax-collectors.

On being informed of the nature of their reply, the Vali delegated a certain Murad Effendi Kuwwetli, a Moslem Notable of this city, and Sheikh Selim Nawfal, a well-known Druse from the district of Hasbeya, to inquire into the truth of the Druse grievances with reference to taxation.

I am informed that the Druses of the Jebel, though, in reality, averse to the payment of any taxes whatever, pretend to be—and in, case of absolute necessity, would possibly be—willing to pay down a lump sum of some 330,000 piastres in lieu of all Government claims for the tithes and sheep tax; the verghi or land tax being, of course, leviable in accordance with the estimation of the officials of the "Cadastre."

It would appear, however, that they are actually in receipt from the Government of a sum amounting to about 400,000 piastres under the guise of "allowances" for the defence of the country against the Bedouins. I might mention here that it is on this plea that the Druses claim exemption from military service, the protection of the borderlands being, in their opinion, equivalent to such service.

If it be true, as I am informed, though I cannot guarantee the truth of the statement, that the Government actually pay the Druses in "allowances" more than it receives from them in the form of taxes, it is a sufficiently grim, if somewhat humorous, comment on the methods of administration adopted and apparently approved of in this country.

I have, &c.
(Signed) W. S. RICHARDS.

No. 88.

Mr. de Bunsen to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received June 27.)

(No. 367.)
My Lord, *Therapia, June 22, 1898.*

IN Sir P. Currie's despatch No. 248 of the 20th April his Excellency transmitted to your Lordship a despatch from Her Majesty's Consul at Damascus respecting the strained relations existing between the Vali, Nazim Pasha, and Abdullah Pasha, the Commandant of the 5th Army Corps stationed in that vilayet.

Nazim Pasha has pursued, ever since he became Vali of Syria, a mild and conciliatory policy towards the turbulent and unmanageable tribes of the Hauran, a region occupied by a mixed population of Druses, Bedouin, and so-called "Hauranese" Moslems who have always been a source of trouble and anxiety to Ottoman officials.

Mr. Richards states that the effect of Nazim Pasha's attitude has been highly satisfactory, since the Hauran has enjoyed unusual tranquillity during his term of office.

The Mushir Abdullah Pasha has, however, consistently protested from the beginning against the Vali's policy, has advocated measures of severe repression against the Druses, and, in his correspondence with his superiors here, has lost no opportunity of throwing discredit on the Vali by representing the Hauran to be on the verge of rebellion owing to the weakness of that official.

Abdullah Pasha is a man of some talent and of very great tenacity of purpose, and had no difficulty in winning over the Minister of War to his side, and a report became current that Nazim Pasha was to be removed after only nine months' tenure of office.

Sir P. Currie accordingly caused representations to be made both at the Ministry of War and at the Porte in favour of the Vali's retention.

Tewfik Pasha stated, confidentially, that the Porte, and even the Palace, approved of Nazim Pasha's policy, but held out little hope of being able to give him effective support. The Minister of War, when addressed on the subject, declined to listen to argument, and the removal of Nazim appeared therefore to be a matter of a few weeks at most.

Events, however, have taken a different course, for on the 9th instant Mr. Richards was able to report that Abdullah Pasha had been ordered to leave Damascus for the Yemen, where he was to take command of the 7th Army Corps.

The explanation of this sudden change of purpose is not, as might be supposed, that Nazim Pasha has triumphed over his adversary, but that Abdullah Pasha, of whose ability a high opinion is held at head-quarters, is regarded as the best man to cope with the disturbances in his new district. Should his removal render possible the continuance of Nazim Pasha at Damascus there is no doubt that the Vilayet of Syria will have gained by it.

I have, &c.
(Signed) M. DE BUNSEN.

No. 89.

Mr. de Bunsen to the Marquess of Salisbury.—(Received June 27.)

(No. 372.)
My Lord,

Therapia, June 25, 1898.

WITH reference to my telegram No. 135 of the 22nd June, I have the honour to transmit herewith a Memorandum by Mr. Marinitsch, Second Dragoman to Her Majesty's Embassy, who accompanied Colonel Ponsonby on his visit to the Seraskierate, reporting the statements made by the Minister of War on the subject of the insurrectionary movement in the Yemen.

I have, &c.
(Signed) M. DE BUNSEN.

Inclosure in No. 89.

Memorandum by Mr. Marinitsch.

THE Minister of War states that he regards the insurrectionary movement which has taken place in the Yemen as terminated. He is of opinion that it was originally caused by the famine which prevails in the Yemen. His Excellency added that the insurgents had cut off communications and severed the telegraph wires between Sanaa and the locality known as Maana, which is in the direct route between Hodeida and Sanaa, and about half-way between these two places. The rebels had surrounded the Vali, but were put to flight by the Commander-in-chief, Ahmed Feozi Pasha, who arrived with two battalions and escorted the Vali to Sanaa. In order to prevent future disorders the Government is sending 22,500 men to the Yemen; some of these have already arrived. This corps is composed of 16,000 Redifs and 6,500 new recruits. The two brigades composing this Division have been taken from Adana and Acre respectively. Seven batteries of mountain artillery have also been sent to the Yemen, one being from Constantinople and furnished with guns manufactured at the capital.

The Minister ended by stating that the sensational commentaries published by the press were grossly exaggerated, and that the actual facts were as given above.

June 22, 1898.

Note by Mr. Block.

Note by Mr. Block.—The chief causes of the Yemen revolt are: The famine and the action of the Vali, Mushir, who has plundered the inhabitants at a time when they had nothing to pay. Also the fact that the number of troops has been considerably reduced the last two years.

No. 90.

The Marquess of Salisbury to Sir M. Durand.

(No. 61.)
Sir,

Foreign Office, June 27, 1898.

I TRANSMIT to you herewith a copy of a despatch from Her Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Constantinople,* forwarding reports from Her Majesty's Vice-Consul at Van on the state of affairs on both sides of the Turko-Persian frontier.

Captain Elliot suggests the appointment of a British Agent at Urumiah to counteract the influence of the Russian Vice-Consulate, which he understands is shortly to be established there.

I request you to favour me with your opinion on Captain Elliot's suggestion.

I am, &c.
(Signed) SALISBURY.

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* No. 72.